The 'Creole Indian'
The emergence of East Indian civil society in Trinidad and Tobago, c.1897-1945

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THE 'CREOLE INDIAN':

THE EMERGENCE OF EAST INDIAN CIVIL SOCIETY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, c.1897-1945

by

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ABSTRACT

Between 1838 when slavery ended, and 1917, some 143,939 Indians came to Trinidad as indentured labourers. This thesis examines how these migrants pulled from all over the subcontinent, first organised themselves as 'East Indians', and then came to demand civic and political rights as Trinidadians from 1897 to1945.

Central to this process was the emergence of the 'Creole Indian'. This group stood distinct both from those who understood themselves as Indian sojourners in the West Indies, and from the African and European elements of the population. This dissertation explores how Indians responded to the plantation experience, the demands and pressures of British planters and colonial administrators, Canadian Presbyterian missionaries and educators, Afro-Trinidadian trade unionism and political nationalism, nationalists in India, and the wider transnational anti-colonial networks which spanned the British Empire.

The school, the trade union, temple and mosque were spaces where immigrants and their descendants negotiated new ways of imagining their status as Indians abroad, as subjects of the British Empire, as Indians and West Indians. These negotiations did not move in a homogenous or linear way, but their consequence was to constitute new kinds of identities, embodied in a variety of kinds of political claims, some for special spaces in the society, but more generally for a fuller enjoyment of membership in civic and political rights. There were many competing interests, and there was no single Indian interest or movement. One of the aims of the thesis is to trace the variety of groups, interests, and perspectives which emerged among migrants. To map this complex field of sentiment and organisation helps us to understand better where the ethnic and religious political cleavages which have characterised Trinidad politics since the 1950s have some of their origins. But it is also perhaps, to explore paths not taken, and alternative negotiations of the civic identity of people of East Indian descent as Trinidadians and West Indian. In general, this dissertation is a contribution to the cultural history of politics in twentieth-century Trinidad.

Key words: Creole, diaspora, indigeneity, transnationalism, Trinidad, race, indenture, anti-colonial movement

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LIST OF ABBREVIATONS

ASJA	Anjuman-Sunnatul Jamat Assocation
ATSEFWU	All Trinidad Sugar Estates Factory Workers Union
BECHRP	British Empire and Citizens Home Rule Party
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
BL	British Library
BWIR	British West Indies Regiment
C&I	Commerce and Industry
CO	Colonial Office
DLP	Democratic Labour Party
E,H&L(O)	Education, Health and Lands, (Overseas)
E, H&L (L&O)	Education, Health and Lands (Lands and Overseas)
EIAB	East Indian Advisory Board
EIDL	East Indian Destitute League
EIH	East Indian Herald
EINA	East Indian National Association
EINC	East Indian National Congress
EIW	East Indian Weekly
GOI	Government of India
G&WILC	Guianese and West Indian Labour Congress
INC	Indian National Congress
INP	Indian National Party
IO	India Office
IOR	India Office Records
IASB	International African Service Bureau
ILP	Independent Labour Party
ITUCNW	International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers
LAI	League Against Imperialism
LL	Labour Leader
NAI	National Archives India
NATT	National Archives Trinidad and Tobago
NUM	National Unemployment Movement
NWA	Negro Welfare Association
NWCSA	Negro Welfare and Cultural Association
OWTU	Oilfields Workers' Trade Union
PCC	Presbyterian Church Archives of Canada
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PNM	People's National Movement
QRC	Queen’s Royal College
RILU	Red International Labour Union
RPA	Rate Payer’s Association
SDMS	Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha
SDPS	Sanatan Dharma Pratindhi Sabha

SMC	Sarah Morton Collection
TCL	Trinidad Citizen's League
TIA	Tackveetyatul Islamic Association
TLP	Trinidad Labour Party
TNA/UK	The National Archives/United Kingdom
TUC	Trade Union Congress
TWA	Trinidad Workingman's Association
UAC	United Church Archives Canada
WIRC	West Indian Royal Commission

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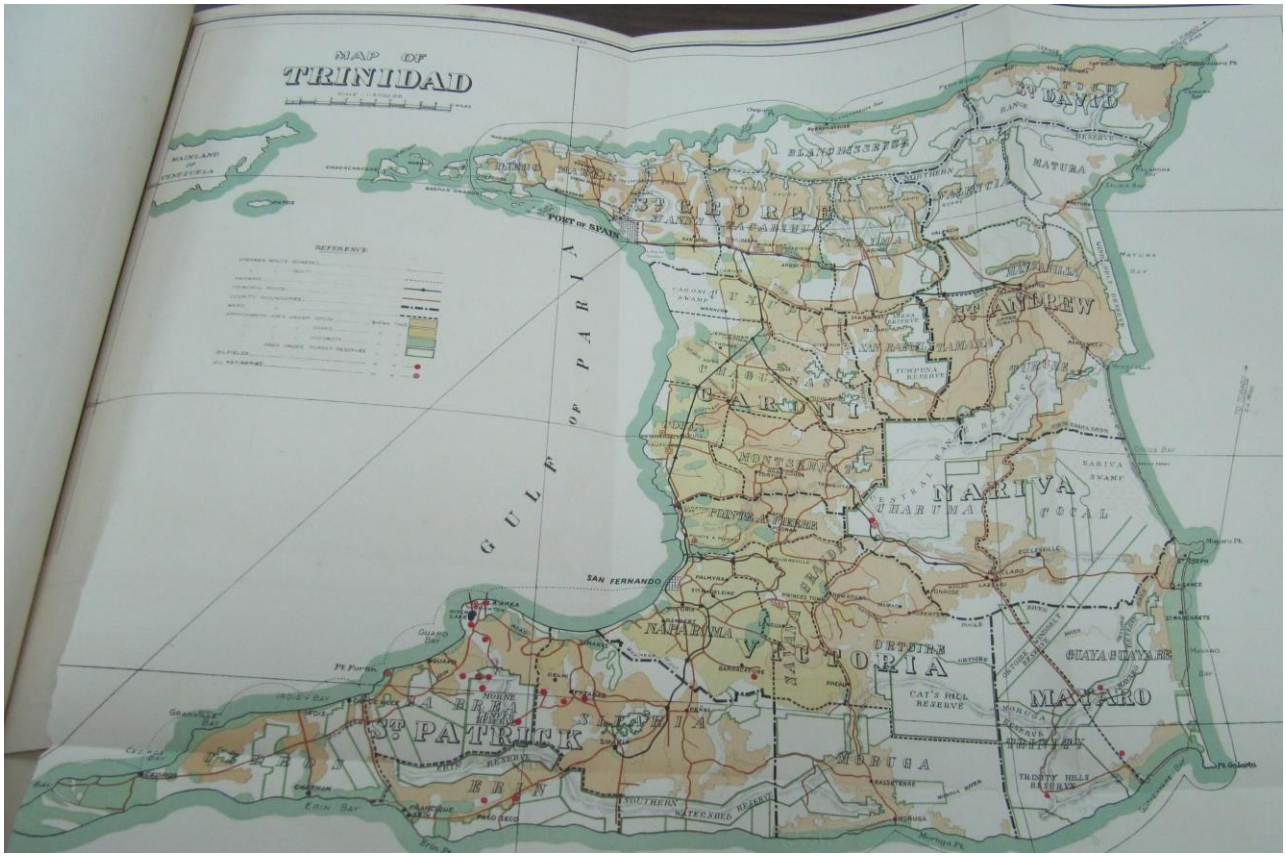

Figure 1. Map of Trinidad. Source: Annual Report of Trinidad and Tobago, 1931, Council Paper No. 76, 1931, Trinidad and Tobago, N.A.T.T.

Introduction

Between Settlement and Diaspora

The Project

The emergence of an East Indian civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is a classic case of an 'entangled history'.[1] The presence of the Indian in Trinidad makes visible the connected histories of Britain, Canada, India and Trinidad. This project examines how Indian sojourners first consolidated an 'East Indian community' in Trinidad between c. 1897 and 1945 relative to the existing creole matrix of Trinidad society, the emergence of Indian nationalism, the shifting strategies of British imperialism and the rise in the interwar period of a global anti-colonial movement. During this period, East Indian leaders and their organisations demanded political rights under the Crown Colony regime, and later, its replacement by a more representative constitution. In this, they generated both separate 'communal' political movements, and in other cases, participated in the wider currents of the emerging national politics of Trinidad. At the heart of this dissertation is the problem of the tension between these two political options: a separate mobilization along lines of ethnicity, culture or religion, or participation within the anti-colonial struggle.

The research questions that guided this project were: How did a community of migrants in their new host society come to constitute a 'civil society'?, and how did they locate themselves politically both relative to their diasporic origins, and to their new context that included Afro-Trinidadians and Indian nationalists who were on a path towards self-government? Underlying these questions however, is the larger problem of how ethnicity shaped different streams of national politics in colonial Trinidad of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The consequences of this early twentieth century moment still

[1] M.Werner and B. Zimmerman, 'Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the challenge of Reflexivity, *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 30-50.

reverberate in the country's civic life almost fifty-two years after its independence from the British Empire.

Background and the case for Trinidad

Indian indentureship and migration was a global phenomenon in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has been the subject of burgeoning scholarship over a variety of disciplines which have sought to understand the contours of Indian communities in many geographical areas. Indentureship, of course, was not the only form of Indian migration; rather, systems like the *Kangany* in Ceylon that worked on kinship networks, the *Maistry* in Burma, or even Indians migrating to East Africa as merchants have a role to play in the global history of Indian migration.[2] With respect to indentureship in the British West Indies, Indians were shipped not only to Trinidad but also to British Guiana- which absorbed the majority of Indian migrants- and Jamaica, St. Lucia and Grenada. Other important areas included Mauritius and Fiji. In all cases, the use of Indian workers drove down the price of wage labour to the detriment of other workers in the society who received them. Trinidad was part of this larger pattern, but with its own special features.

In each colony, indentureship was administered in a different way. One key factor to account for this difference was the availability of resources, mainly that of land, as this determined how labour was utilized. For example, the sugar industry in Fiji was based exclusively on Indian indentured labourers, as Fijian indigenous labour was never recruited for the plantations. But, one critical difference from the British West Indies is that after the annexation of Fiji in 1874, colonial policies severely restricted the right of Indian migrants to own land in order to protect the interest of native Fijians.[3] In Trinidad, sugar manufacturing had a longer history compared to Fiji. In the latter, the introduction of the Indians was not a

[2] Chenchal Kondapi, *Indians Overseas* (New Delhi, 1951).
[3] K.L. Gillion, *Fiji's Indian Migrants: A History to the end of Indenture in 1920* (Melbourne, 1962).

problem associated with a shortage of labour.[4] Secondly, Indians in Trinidad were given the right to own land after they completed their term of indenture. British Guiana has the clearest similarity to Trinidad as its West Indian neighbour. Both were slave colonies annexed by the British from other European empires. But while in British Guiana forms of representative government on a limited franchise survived until 1928, Trinidad was a Crown Colony in which the Governor exercised sovereignty guided only by a weak legislature and a nominated executive council.[5] Both the experience of indentureship in Trinidad and its political aftermath have therefore its own unique characteristics.

Between 1845 and 1917, over 143, 939[6] Indians arrived in the Crown Colony of Trinidad and Tobago under the indentureship system. Planters sought to secure labour for the various agricultural plantations specializing in sugar, and to a lesser extent cocoa, after the emancipation of African slaves in 1838. The migration of Indian labourers, whether free or coerced, is part of the story of British imperial and colonial schemes to maintain their command of labour amongst their subject races. Indentured labour functioned in the continuation of empire building;[7] it was a piece of colonial machinery that ordered labour along racial lines in which the local Afro-Trinidadian wage earner who was still a vital player in Trinidad's developing industries was displaced.

It is worth mentioning earlier migration experiments in Trinidad which preceded the arrival of Indians. In 1808, after the abolition of the Slave Trade, there was one early trial of Chinese 'coolie' labour, but at the time parliament considered the costs of extending it to be

[4] *Ibid.*
[5] For some of the early literature on the East Indian experiences in British Guiana see Dwarka Nath, *A History of Indians in British Guiana* (London, 1970).
[6] Loopmarsh Ramnarine, *Indo Caribbean Indenture*. (Kingston, 2007), 6.
[7] Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, 'Introduction: being at home with empire' in Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (eds.), *At Home with Empire. Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge, 2006), 5-6.

excessive.[8] After the Napoleonic Wars, in Trinidad, there were also experiments sanctioned by the British government to settle free negro troops who had served in the British forces in the War of 1812 with Sir Ralph Woodford assigning them, to Crown Lands in Manzanilla, Quaré, Arima and the Naparimas. Woodford ensured that each negro refugee was given sixteen acres of land to cultivate a variety of crops like corn, pumpkins and plantains. However, these free negro settlements were hard to maintain due to a lack of funds from the Imperial government. As well, there was a lack of proper infrastructure such as roads and other means to transport goods or establish connections between settlements. Often because of lack of steady employment and income, most settlers drifted away from their respective areas and squatted on other Crown lands. These abandoned settlements were forgotten and therefore garnered no attention until 1858, when they became the areas chosen by Indians coming out of indenture for settlement and cultivation. [9]

In 1834, the Emancipation of Africans who had worked as slaves on the sugar plantations presented a crisis to planters who sought labour which was cheap, and, who perhaps preferred it when it was unfree. K.O. Lawrence notes that the large effort to import additional labour began as a response "to the twin desires to improve the supply of labour and to reduce wages in order to save an industry gravely threatened by cheaper competition."[10] Although in 1854 immigration was seen as a short term solution to remedy falling prices in sugar, over time Indian labour had become a permanent and regular course of action to sustain the whole basis of sugar production in Trinidad and British Guiana, and, to a lesser

[8] BPP. (British Parliamentary Papers), 1810-11 *ii* , (*Report from the Select Committee appointed to consider the practicality and expediency of supplying the West India Colonies with Free Labourers from the East*, by John Robinson).

[9] K.O. Lawrence, 'The Settlement of Free Negroes in Trinidad Before Emancipation', *Caribbean Quarterly*, 9, (1969), 26-53. Note: I am using term negro to reflect my use of this source.
[10]K.O. Lawrence, *A Question of Labour*. *Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana 1875-1917*. (New York, 1994), 4.

extent Jamaica.[11] These labourers were inserted into an environment in which political, social and cultural institutions were controlled by the British.

Indians who arrived and settled Trinidad became known as East Indians. They shared the physical space of the colony alongside a majority African population who continued to work in sugar factories as apprentices, and as small business entrepreneurs in urban areas. Tough immigration laws and the indentured contract were carefully worded to tie the East Indian to the land. Planters needed to satisfy two goals: a labour force that would not be free to move away from the estates and a means of controlling the wages immigrants earned to maximize profits from lucrative products such as sugar and cocoa.[12] Lawrence argues that "East Indian immigration became essentially a government-operated enterprise at a time when it was generally accepted in Britain that government would not normally take direct responsibility for such matters."[13] An immigrant on arrival would serve a three- year indentured contract with a single employer. The cost of bringing East Indians to Trinidad fell on two fronts: revenue from planters, and taxes coming from the Afro-Trinidadian population. Therefore, the contract for indentureship was a tool designed by planters to fix Indian labourers on their assigned estates. Heavy fines and penal sanctions restricted the movement of the labourer. For five years, the immigrant worked as an unfree labourer by engaging in five one-year contracts, or he paid a monthly tax for the return passage subject to criminal sanctions if he failed to complete the contract. For Afro-Trinidadians, this was a double insult because East Indian indentured servants were considered as a foreign force who were stealing jobs in the agricultural sugar belt.[14] The system of indentureship racialized

[11] *Ibid*. 6
[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Madhavi Kale, *Fragments of Empire* 1845-1917 (Philadelphia, 1998).

Indians as mere agricultural workers who were seen as economic tools of labour that was subject to the capitalist measures of the British planter class.[15]

Indian immigrants to Trinidad came from many parts of the Indian subcontinent by way of depots located in Calcutta and Madras. They brought many languages and religions from India that marked them as a distinct linguistic and even racial group. However, as Trinidad was a Crown Colony of the British Empire, the English language was mandated as a tool of communication for all political, social and economic matters concerning Trinidad. As well, Trinidad was a Christian island and the majority of Indians were Hindus and Muslims. Indians thus found themselves marked not just by racial difference, but by religion and culture.[16]

Literature Review

Indian migration to Trinidad and the narrations of their contributions take place in the developing histories of British metropolitan and colonial relations. It comprised a set of actors that included planters, administrators, Canadian missionaries, Afro-Caribbean and Indian nationalists. In order to tell the story of how East Indians constituted a civic identity that takes into account these external influences, the framework of this project is based on a transnational discipline. Briefly, a transnational approach is characterized by a "desire to break out of the nation state or singular nation state as the category of analysis and especially to eschew the ethnocentrism that once characterized the writing of history in the West."[17] This project operates under Chris Bayly's understanding that transnationalism is a method

[15] Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery the export of Indian labour overseas, 1830-1920 (*Oxford, 1973), 10.
[16] In 1975, 1985 and 2005 John Gaffar La Guerre and other editors like Ann-Marie Bisessar produced an anthology of essays entitled *Calcutta to Caroni* . This compilation was published three times and carries significant articles written by K.O. Lawrence, Bridget Brereton, Kusha Haracksingh, Brinsley Samaroo, Kelvin Singh, John Gaffar Laguerre, Carl Campbell and even politicians like Winston Dookeran.

[17] 'AHR Roundtable on Transnational History'. Participants: C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connely, Isabel Hofmyer, Wendy Kozoi and Patricia Seed. *American Historical Review*, 4, (2006), 1441-1462. See also Steven Vertovec, *Transnationalism* (London, 2009).

that gives "a sense of movement and interpenetration...broadly associated with the study of diasporas, social or political which cross national boundaries etc.[18] However, despite these influences and networks, Indians who migrated to Trinidad, were bracketed under the homogenous category of "East Indians" who were driven to the fringes of colonial society. As labourers on the estates in the rural south, most notably in the Naparimas and San Fernando, they were considered to be 'communal'. These arguments were based on racial and ethnic assumptions. Rather than beginning with these elements of difference, this project argues the reverse, in that the racial and ethnic distinctions were recalibrated given the needs of a plantation regime. Moreover, these elements of difference were exacerbated during times of political upheaval both in Trinidad and in India. They were reinforced because of the tense relationships Indian migration caused between groups of actors who were economically, politically, intellectually and even spiritually invested in the system of Indian indentured labour.

Historians in the late twentieth century had a keen interest in the global phenomenon of Indian migration throughout the British Empire. Notable experts like Hugh Tinker[19] and David Northrup[20] situated indentureship in an imperialist framework by doing a comparative study of indentured labour in the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands. Experts like K.L Gillion,[21], K.O. Lawrence,[22] and Walton Look Lai[23] specialized in their respective regions to locate the specificity of the experiences of Indian migration in these territories.

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[18] *Ibid*. Chris Bayly, 1442.

[19] Hugh Tinker, *A New system of slavery* (Oxford , 1974); *Separate and unequal : India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950* (London, 1976); *The Banyan Tree*: *Overseas Emigrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (Oxford, 1977).

[20] David Northrup, *Indentureship in the Age of Imperialism. 1834-1922*. (Cambridge, 1995).

[21] K..L. Gillion, *The Fiji Indians,* (Melbourne,1962); *The Fiji Indians : challenge to European dominance, 1920-1946* (Melbourne, 1962). For the experiences of Indian migration to Fiji please see Brij Lal *The Girmitiyas* : *the origins of the Fiji Indians* (Canberra, 1983).

[22] K..O Lawrence *A Question of Labour*; *Immigration to the West Indies in the 19thC (*Kingston, 1971).

[23] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured labour, Caribbean sugar : Chinese and Indian migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore, 1993).

Intense studies on the experiences of Indian labourers in Mauritius[24], Fiji, Kenya, South Africa and the British West Indies like Trinidad and British Guiana added to the burgeoning literature on the function of Indian migration within British imperialism. Taking Trinidad and British Guiana as their case studies, both Lawrence and Look Lai examined how the indentured scheme was carried out in each respective colony. Each argued that availability of land enabled East Indians to become permanent settlers. To Look Lai's credit, he connected the experiences of the Chinese diaspora in Trinidad and British Guiana who preceded the arrival of Indians in these areas. He illustrated that Chinese labourers shared similar experiences with their Indian successors as the new form of cheap and sustainable labour.

The migration of Indians to various points of the globe has much in common with the British migration in the eighteenth, nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. In her work on British migration to parts of the Atlantic in the Early Modern World, Alison Games defines "a migrant as someone who moves, if not permanently, then for a significant period of time. [*The issue of permanence is problematic*]: it is difficult to tell whether people intended migrations to be permanent; the habit of migration often prodded people to move again."[25] Like British migration, there were a host of factors that informed the decision for Indians to leave their homeland. Indian sojourners who came from areas like Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh represented a cross section of their societies that took into account caste, religion, language, and economic status. Their reasons for migrating included: "population pressure, periodic famines, political upheavals like the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and changing economic conditions [which] drove large numbers of Indians out of their ancestral

[24] The key works that deal with Mauritius are Martina Carter *Voices from Indenture: experiences of Indentured Labourers in the British Empire,* (London, 1996) and Richard B. Allen, *Slaves, Freedmen and indentured labourers in colonial Mauritius* (London, 1999).
[25] Alison Games, 'Migration' in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, *The British Atlantic World 500-1800* (Basinsgstoke, 2000), 31.

villages."[26] With respect to the Indian arrivals in Trinidad and the rest of the Caribbean, theirs was a shared, yet different experience with respect to British and African migration. It was a mixture of both consent and coercion in which their personal decisions were entangled in domestic upheaval in both Trinidad and India in economic and political arenas. Letters exchanged between families in India and their kin in Trinidad, official correspondence, rates of repatriation and arrivals and materials from activists in India indicate that there was no single reason for Indians to leave their homeland. However, nationalist interests obscured these factors that led a handful of Indian sojourners to cross the black waters.

The presence of the Indian, their integration into Trinidadian, and in general, West Indian history takes place *in media res.* Groups of migrant sojourners from India who sought to establish a permanent community were caught up in the struggles of their own diasporic homeland, as well as that of their host nation amongst Afro-Trinidadians who were demanding more political autonomy from the imperial government. From these developments, both Indians on the subcontinent and Afro-Trinidadians sought to create their own histories that depicted their struggles and triumphs in freeing themselves from the shackles of British imperial dominance.

From the time Indians arrived in Trinidad, they were placed in linguistic, religious and ethnic categories. In perusing the registers of Indian migrants who were about to depart for overseas locations, it was noted that the Emigration pass- which was issued to them- identified their name, kin, age, caste, height, thana, village and any bodily marks. These descriptions were symptomatic of the colonial mindset that needed to organize Indian society,

[26] David Northrup, 'Migration from Africa, South Asia and the Pacific' in Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.) *Oxford History of the British Empire Volume III, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 93. See also, Marjory Harper, 'British Migration and the Peopling of the British Empire in Andrew Porter and Wm. Roger Louis (eds.) *Oxford History of the British Empire Volume III, The Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 1999), 74-86, and Steven Constantine, 'British Emigration to the Empire From Overseas Settlement to Diaspora', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 31 (2003), 16-35.

which in practice became useful with the needs of the plantation. For example in 1866, upon seeing a new group of Indian immigrants, W.H. Gamble, a London Baptist minister in Trinidad, wrote:

> The slightest knowledge of the inhabitants of Hindustan tells us that the people of the two Presidencies are distinct. The Bengalis speak Hindustani and Bengali while the inhabitants of the Madras Presidency speak Tamil, a totally different language. The Coolies from Calcutta are proving valuable, steady labourers while those from Madras are for the most part, useless. This is accounted by the fact that those who embark from Calcutta have come from the interior and have been used to the cultivation of rice or indigo all their lives...The Madras Coolies appear to be with few exceptions, the scum and refuse of the city of Madras-stray waifs who have sunk low on their lives before they find their way into the hands of the shipping agent. One would have thought beforehand, from hearing the Bengali and Tamil spoken that the former would show much greater aptness in learning English than the latter, but that is not so. The Bengalis, on the other hand, seldom attempt to speak English.[27]

Similarly, in his travelogue *Journey Down the Caribbees* (1887), William Agnew Paton described the Indian presence in Trinidad as "coolie emigrants [who] have brought their country with them; they orientalise that part of the new world into which they have come- they are not new worldified, by crossing the seas being transplanted, with a great ball of the soil they grew in clinging to them and giving nourishment to deep rooted prejudices...these weird and astonishing folk stand credited in my imagination with having their own skies with them, as if they feared to trust themselves out of doors in an atmosphere of progress and ideas."[28] From Paton and Gamble's statements, Indians and their kin were depicted as having distinct and unrelenting religious customs, and that they refused to adapt to their new environments. These ethnographic statements about Indians functioned to elevate the Indian worker as a productive member in society. The Indian subject was pitted against the Afro-

[27] W.H. Gamble, *Trinidad Historical and Descriptive, A Narrative of Nine Years residence un the island with special reference to Christian missions* (London, 1866), 12.
[28] William Agnew Paton, *Journey Down the Caribees* (New York, 1887) ,206. See also Amar Wahab, 'Mapping West Indian Orientalism Race, Gender and Representations of Indentured Coolies in Nineteenth Century British West Indies', *Journal of Asian and American Studies*, 10, (2007), 283-311. Travelogues like Charles Kingsley *Christmas at Last in the West Indies* are also of value (London, 1871).

Trinidadian worker, a former slave, who, by contrast was regarded as lazy and who did not take advantage of self-improvement.[29]

These statements must be seen in the larger context of how colonial subjects were ordered. Economic and political sectors in British- controlled areas were shaped by the actions of colonial populations. Frederick Cooper and Ann Stoler remind us that "caste in India and 'tribe' in Africa were, in part, colonial constructs, or efforts to render fluid and confusing social and political relationships into categories sufficiently static and reified and thereby useful to colonial understanding and control."[30] How large segments of Indian society were rendered voiceless or gained labels like "mob" is in part indicative of how India became known to the British rulers who reinforced a binary of "us" and "them". In the Caribbean, labour schemes, whether it was slavery or indentured labour ordered Trinidad's working class population by means of race.

Religious custom and language that were public indicators of Indian heritage were giving way to the conditions of colonial society. Indians had to find a new identity that negotiated their cultural heritage with that of a society that was dominated by Christians and one in which the English language was the basis of established social, political and economic life. Thus, an appreciation and awareness to the creation of these diverse sets of identities provides insight into the politics of how Indians sought to belong to Trinidadian society. Arguably, this system of classification apparent in nineteenth century ethnographic descriptions has had a profound impact on how Indians are written into nation histories where

[29] *Ibid*. 211

[30]Fredrick Cooper and Ann Stoler, *Tensions of Empire. Colonial Cultures in a bourgeois world* (London, 1997), 11. For further studies on the relationship between power, knowledge and rule with regards to colonialism and the production of texts like travelogues in India, see Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton,1996), Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 2003) and Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1993).

there is a significant East Indian presence. Indeed this project demonstrates that the characteristics used in categorizing East Indians by religion, occupation and language were themselves in flux given the pressures being exerted on Trinidad's economic and political outlook.

In 1962, Eric Williams and his People's National Movement (P.N.M.) party, was democratically elected. Williams marked the advent of Trinidad's independence from the British Empire in his book *A History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*. The publication of this text was influenced by Trinidad's political climate of the late 1940's and 60's that included an increased American intervention at the Naval Base at Chaguaramas, the collapsed dream of a West Indian Federation and racial tension between Afro-Trinidadians and East Indians along the lines of party politics. All these elements threatened the political stability of this new nation. In his preface, Williams wrote: "This Book is dedicated to all those who have gone before in the struggle for independence and against colonialism." This book was to provide the people of Trinidad and Tobago on "their Independence Day with a National History."[31] With keen attention to the transfers of power in Trinidad from Spanish to French and eventually British rule, Williams crafted his narrative by sketching in the peoples of Trinidad and Tobago starting with the Amerindians, the contribution of slaves in working the sugar plantations and the arrival of the Indian indentured labourers into the economic and political framework of Trinidadian society. Throughout this book, political economy was entwined in the workings of Crown rule. In his treatment of the contribution of Indians, he duly notes their efforts on the estates and gives economic data on the returns of the production of sugar following Trinidad's labour problem after Emancipation.[32] He hoped that on the day of their independence, the people of Trinidad and Tobago "would make their own

[31] Eric Williams, *The History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago* (Port of Spain, 1962), ix. Also see Eric Williams, *British Historians and the West Indies* (London, 1966) and *From Columbus to Castro. The History of the Caribbean* (London, 1970).

[32] *Ibid.* 103-121

history; they will be active and no longer passive and [borrowing from the national anthem], 'here e'vry creed and race [will] find an equal place.[33] He concluded: "There can be no Mother India for those ancestors who came from India...There can be no Mother Africa for those of African origin...A nation like an individual can only have one Mother. The only mother we recognize is Mother Trinidad.[34] Despite the historical specificities and unique circumstances that marked the arrival and settlement of Trinidad's citizens, Williams' battle cry for unity was, in essence, an imagined community. He prefaced his work in acknowledging the diasporic origins of every colonial subject, but in the end imposed a singular belonging to the nation of Trinidad. *A History of Trinidad and Tobago* and other national monographs of the Caribbean are written as pieces of evidence on Creole nationalism. Critical works on these studies include Gordon K. Lewis's *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: the Historical Evolution of Caribbean society in its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900.* For Lewis, it seems that the treatment of East Indians presented a rupture in developments at a time when members of the host societies were articulating their sense of nationalism. He claims that it would "be a perverse argumentation to claim that the East Indian as he came to be called, contributed to the rise of Caribbean nationalism."[35]In this regard, East Indian contributions are seen as separate to the development of political economy in the region.

Since William's publication in 1962, there have been challenges and commentaries to his grand narrative especially when it comes to the treatment of East Indians. For example, in 1965, C.L.R. James- the noted Marxist and Pan-African scholar who was a native to Trinidad wrote his essay 'West Indians of East Indian Descent'. He decried the fact that there was any

[33] *Ibid*. 282
[34] *Ibid.* 279
[35] Gordon K. Lewis, *Main currents in Caribbean thought : the historical evolution of Caribbean society in its ideological aspects, 1492-1900.* (Baltimore, 1983), 241-245. See also Shalini Puri, *The Caribbean Post-Colonial: Social Equality, post-nationalism and cultural hybridity*. (Basingstoke, 2004).

racial tension between Afro-Trinidadians and East Indians. In everyday life, James noted the involvement of East Indian sugar workers and Afro-Trinidadian oilfield workers in the trade unions. In the title of his work, he places "East Indians living in Trinidad as having a common ancestry with "West Indians". He also challenged the communal label attached to East Indians who had become naturalized to Trinidadian society. In his mind, the racial tension was a misunderstanding of the communal /separatist label attached to East Indians that arose from the historical predicaments of either race. This label was the antithesis to the lack of a communal identity amongst Africans and those of African descent in Trinidad. He writes: "During the slave trade, African tribes were broken up, no common religion, nothing. The Indian on the other hand brought with him food, language social habits and moral practices."[36] In other words, the dehumanizing effects of slavery forced a cohesive social solidarity amongst the African population, while the Indian on the other hand retained his or her idea of community and identity whilst in Trinidad.

In 1965, H.P. Singh, a noted East Indian businessman in Trinidad and editor of the East Indian serial *The Observer*, wrote that James' observations were astute, but his idealistic vision did not sit well with all East Indians who, as this project argues, were still coming to terms with their new homeland despite the fact that indentureship had been terminated for over 44 years. H.P. Singh challenged James' conceptualization of the racial tension in Trinidad. He wrote:

> Mr. James has done no credit to himself by this misstatement. This is an admission that he is unaware of the many works dealing with this subject. And it is not easy for thus to believe that Mr. James is in fact ignorant of some of these works. Surely, he must have read Morton Klass and Arthur Niehoff's works on Indians in Trinidad? ...And does James want us to believe that he never read the report of Lord Sanderson on the question of Indian immigration, or the report of the Wood Commission or the Tyson report or the report of the O'Riley's Committee? Or is he trying to tell us that he is not familiar with the essays of Surgeon Major Comins or John Morton of Trinidad? Of course it is quite likely that he never read the evidence of Prudhomme David or of Alfred' Richards before the Sanderson Commission. Nor has he read

[36] C.L.R. James, 'West Indians of East Indian Descent' (Port of Spain, 1965), 4.

> Hansard's version of Dr. Lawrence versus the Indian Community. We refuse to believe that he has not read Dr. Williams' *History of the People of Trinidad and Tobago*. Mr. James, this question of racial prejudice between Indians and Negroes has been beaten bare.[37]

In this brief moment, both the practice of academic disciplines and archival work have come together to illustrate how East Indians in Trinidad were articulating their sense of identity to be part of Trinidad's history. This passage provides ample proof that the presence of the Indian in Trinidad represents a case for transnationalism because it links not only the histories of Britain, India, Canada but Trinidad as well. He alludes to the works of Klass and Niehoff , pioneer cultural anthropologists who chose to study the Indians in Trinidad as objects of their fieldwork. Additionally, his knowledge of the commissions, reports, a Canadian missionary journal and key individuals had significant consequences on how Indians in Trinidad were to be settled in lieu of both developments occurring in Britain, India, Canada and Trinidad. Consequently, these collective works are utilized in this project and are examined within their own context. On an imaginative level, Indians in Trinidad were borrowing, exchanging and analyzing evidence of the parties who had their own viewpoints on Indian migration to articulate their sense of identity at their present moment. With respect to Williams, James and H.P Singh, there is an inherent struggle to validate the contributions of the East Indian in Trinidad. In light of this, studies on East Indians in Trinidad, the West Indies and even parts of the Indian Ocean have fallen into three categories: migration, diaspora and less explored creolization; in fact, all of these themes are linked.

Academics from a variety of disciplines have claimed the term "diaspora" to examine how East Indians have sought to preserve their Indian heritage that is predominantly characterized by religion in colonial and post-colonial Trinidad. [38] The term diaspora is a

[37] H.P. Singh, 'The Indian Enigma, A Review of C.LR. James' West Indians of East Indian descent or a study in Coolietude' (Port of Spain, 1965), 5.

[38] Brinsley Samaroo and Anne-Marie Bissessar (eds.), *The Construction of an Indo Caribbean Diaspora*. (St. Augustine, 2004). Indian historians and academics have also conceptualized shifting patters of identity through a religious lense by looking at Hindu and Muslim communities. Nominal Hindu communities in Trinidad are a

contentious one as it seeks to account for a whole host of reasons as to why groups of people decide to leave their homelands. Indeed, the term is often confused with migration because it seeks to trace and analyze how a loose group of migrants establish roots in their new contexts. Diaspora can take on a regional aspect such as the Indian diaspora, or even a religious component where migrant followers of Islam and Hinduism come to constitute "a Muslim" or "Hindu" diaspora.[39] These characteristics can become restrictive because it denies the internal complexities that are inherent in these labels. James Clifford, an expert on the evolving concept of diaspora argues that this term carries with it interchangeable currencies amongst migrants who try to re-create new homelands. He writes: "the language of diaspora is increasingly invoked by displaced peoples who feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection with a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing processes of forgetting, assimilating and distancing. Many minority groups that have not previously identified in this way are now reclaiming diasporic origins and affiliations."[40]

A prevalent aspect of diaspora is synonymous with the forced expulsion of ethnic and religious minority from its homeland, most notably the expulsion of Jews from the Holy Land. Given some of the nationalist texts that seem to evoke a sense that overseas Indians residing in Trinidad and elsewhere operate on the outskirts society Indian society, this understanding of diaspora is used by academics to describe East Indians in Trinidad. The appropriation of this term to describe Indian migration to Trinidad found new meaning in light of Hugh Tinker's work entitled *A New System of Slavery* (1973). In this book, he claims

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prominent feature in their studies. For example see N. Jayaram, "The poltics of 'cultural renaissance' among Indo-Trinidadians', in Bhiku Parekh, Gurharpal Singh and Steven Vertovec (eds.) *Culture and Economy in the Indian Diaspora* (London, 2006), 123-142.

[39] Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas* (London, 1994) and Judith Brown *Global South Asian Diasporas* (Oxford, 2006). Brown makes the argument that Indian migrants are a truly transnational people because of the dense networks they find themselves in their respective host societies.

[40] James Clifford, " 'Diasporas': Further Inflections: Toward Ethnographies of the Future" , *Cultural Anthropology*, 9, (1994), 311.

that the administration of the indentured scheme throughout the world, resembled aspects of African slavery. Kidnappings, exploitation of Indian workers on the plantations where they received meagre wages, the cramped conditions on the ships where caste regulations could no longer be enforced as well as high levels of sickness and mortality on ships had virtually excommunicated Indians from their homelands. His work also shed light on the indentured system in the Caribbean colonies, Fiji and Indian workers in South Africa and Natal which catapulted Mohandas K. Gandhi's career in bringing down imperial rule in India.

In 1975, a symposium was held at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, entitled *East Indians in the Caribbean,* where literary authors such as V.S. Naipaul and Samuel Selvon gave keynote speeches. This was the first time that historians from the British West Indies came together to discuss the contributions of Indians in Trinidad and British Guiana less than 40 years after the formal termination of indentureship. This pioneer meeting for East Indian historiography brought East Indian historians like Brinsely Samaroo and Kusha Haracksingh, Bridget Brereton and J.C. Jha together, who, in their public lives, were civil servants either in labour, politics or the legal profession as politicians fighting for East Indian representation. This conference was important because it did not present East Indian contribution in Trinidad alongside the majority Afro-Caribbean population. Indentureship, labour struggles and the fight to retain religious culture for East Indians simultaneously showed how they adapted to colonial society, but that their history was quite different from that of slavery. Moreover, papers given at this conference pointed to making connections with that of other East Indian communities in British Guiana. For instance, Gerard Tikasingh's article on an Indo-centric history is in one way a response to Williams' work. East Indians and historians of Indian migration to the West Indies identify with this definition to illustrate the ways in which Indians have reconstituted their culture in their new environments against nationalist hostilities. Collective monographs that detail many of the

achievements Indians made both during, and after indentureship, serve as a means of remembering the sacrifices the ancestors made when they left India. In conjunction with the colonial administration's failure to recognize non-registered marriages or language, East Indians were presented with an ultimatum: if they wanted to adapt and gain social mobility in Trinidad, they would have to give up their heritage. Samaroo writes that "East Indians have felt persecuted because they were regarded as an interloper by the African population and one who came to depress wages in the colonies".[41] In this stream of thought, diaspora encompasses themes of loss, fragmentation, forced assimilation and double consciousness to illustrate how communities reconstitute and adapt aspects of their culture and ethnicity in a society that is hostile to them.

Collective monographs that detail many of the achievements Indians made both during and after indentureship, serve as a means of remembering the sacrifices their ancestors made when they left India. Here, the importance of acknowledging the ties with Indians is vital. In David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo's *India in the Caribbean* (1985), Samaroo asserts there was a continuing Indian connection via nationalist feeling in India which brought many missionaries from India. Hindu missionaries such as Pundit Mehta Jaimini would hold public lectures and intertwine labour movements in India with religious sentiment. Subsequently, in *The Construction of an Indo Caribbean Diaspora* edited by Brinsley Samaroo and Anne-Marie Bissessar, topics include the recognition of the Panchayat (an Indian Village Court that resolved disputes between East Indian neighbours and relatives), the role of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha, the Hindu identity in Trinidad, as well as the establishment of a Hindu College in Sangre Grande. Brij Lal ends the introduction to this collection by noting: "sub-continental Indians would need to redefine the attitude to the overseas Indians; they are not children of some lesser gods, culturally deficient and deformed

[41] Brinsely Samaroo, 'The Indian Connection' in Brinsley Samaroo and David Dabydeen (eds.) India *in the Caribbean* (Delhi, 1985),107.

who inhabit the remote unlovely fringes of Indian culture and civilization. They are a people with a distinct cultural identity that derives from India but is not confined to it."[42] Despite the brutal and semi- slave conditions of indentureship, East Indians retained a strong cultural heritage.

The second phase focuses on Indians as survivors of indentureship and how this labour scheme re-defined what it meant to be an Indian outside of India. Through educational efforts, the Canadian Presbyterian missionaries helped Indians engage in private enterprises in agriculture. Marianne Ramesar's *Survivors of Another Crossing and* Rosabelle Seesaran's *From Caste to Class* argue that East Indians who had converted to Christianity and had had the benefit of attending Christian mission schools, were granted the social mobility to form political organizations to press the colonial administration for more representation in government and civil service. Presbyterian activity eased the transition for East Indians to operate in a colonial society. This was accomplished by a westernized form of education which meant adopting Christian values and shedding cultural indicators such as language, dress, food, music and seeing the flaws of non-Christian religions.[43] Seesaran highlights individuals like Reverend Lal Bihari, Charles David Lalla and George Fitzpatrick, (the first East Indian to sit on the Legislative Council in 1912) who formed organizations like the East Indian National Association based in Princes Town and the East Indian Congress based in Couva because of a Presbyterian education.[44] Ramesar concludes that the public display of Indian heritage fell victim to colonial politics; however, "Indians showed an endurance and adaptability in discarding many restrictions such as caste and custom to restore broken

[42] Brij Lal. 'People in Between' in. Brinsley Samaroo and Ann-Marie Bissessar (eds.), *The Construction of an Indo Caribbean Diaspora* (St. Augustine, 2004), 1-15.

[43] Seesaran, *Caste to Class,* 225.
[44] Colin Clarke. *East Indians in a West Indian Town. San Fernando*. *Trinidad 1930-1970* (London,1986), 19.

families and to faithfully retain some religious and cultural practice.[45] In the 1920's, "Indians had acknowledged that the relative backwardness of their group in terms of education was disadvantageous in the event of power sharing with other ethnic groups. Encouraged by Indian nationalists in India, articulate Indians (many of them products of Christian schools) urged their fellows to take advantages in education even if it meant downplaying traditions."[46] However, she ends with the paradox that Indian nationalism also inspired religious leaders to consolidate Hindu movements such as the Arya Samaj and the formation of the Sanatan Dharma Association (1932) to combat Christian proselytizing.[47] The term "Western" was disseminated by the missionaries; nevertheless, Presbyterian education shaped the political ideologies of East Indians leaders.

Diaspora studies of Indians in Trinidad have also taken on religious connotations. Historians like Brinsely Samaroo, Kusha Haraksingh and J.C. Jha emphasize the diversity of East Indian immigrants who arrived in Trinidad and how they inserted their ancestral traditions in colonial society. The majority of East Indians who arrived in Trinidad were Hindu; Muslims were in the minority. Hinduism and Islam provided them with a philosophical direction where concepts such as *dharma, karma* and *samsara*[48] were followed and the endearing monotheism of Islam gave Muslim East Indians a religious focal point to come to terms with their new setting. The concept of Sanatan Dharma was significant because it represented the ancientness and sacredness of Hinduism and an understanding of sacred and eternal law.[49] *Pujas* (rite of worship), hymns from the sacred scriptures and festivals such as *Diwali, Phagwa* and public displays of dance dramas of *Ram Leela,*

[45] Marianne Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing (*St. Augustine, 1994,) 151.
[46]*Ibid*. 152
[47] *Ibid*. 154
[48] Rosabelle Seesaran, From *Caste to Class*. (Port of Spain, 2002), 1. Dharma (duty), Karma (accumulated ramifications of action), samsara (the cycle of rebirths)
[49] Brinsley Samaroo.,'Reconstructing Identity: Hindu Organization in Trinidad during the first century' in Brinsley Samaroo and Anne-Marie Bissessar (eds.), *The Construction of Indo Caribbean Diaspora*. (St. Augustine, 2004), 16.

KrisnaLeela and Rasmandal [50] were important indicators of how East Indians strove to illustrate aspects of their religious heritage during and after indentureship. Kusha Haracksingh argues that the Hindu- Indians carried a "slice of their ancestry" in which concepts of dharma were elasticised to suit the new situation; the cry of "dharma in danger" could inspire men to rise up against colonial authority. [51] This is most prevalent when looking at marriages amongst Indian migrants. East Indian marriages were not legally recognized if officiated by an Imam or Pundit. Hence many East Indian children produced from non - registered marriages were declared illegitimate. [52] The formal recognition of all East Indian religious rites would unite and yet divide East Indian organizations as to the best methods to represent their interests. [53] This sentiment in the 1930-1950's comes to the fore when the concept of Indian nationals striving for independence in India was grafted onto East Indian communities in the Caribbean. Haracksingh notes that in the 1950's, school buildings, temple constructions and organized celebrations of *Ram Leela* and *Krisna Leela*, public readings from the religious texts such as the Ramayana[54] as well as cinema showing of religious films were representations of Indian culture being resilient. [55]

Cultural anthropologists such as Arthur and Juanita Niehoff (1960),[56] Morton Klass (1960),[57] Kevin Yelvington (1993), [58] Steven Vertovec [59] and more recently Aisha Khan

[50] J.C. Jha, 'The Indian Heritage', in John Gaffar LaGuere (ed.), *Calcutta to Caroni, The East Indians in Trinidad, 2nd, edition,* (St. Augustine. 1985), 9.
[51] Kusha Haracksingh, 'Aspects of Indian Experience in the Caribbean' in *Calcutta to Caroni* In *Calcutta to Caroni* Ed. John LaGuere (St. Augustine, 1985), 164.
[52] J.C. Jha,"The Background of Legislation of Non-Christian Marriages in Trinidad and Tobago'. In Bridget Brereton and Winston Dookeran (eds.) *East Indians in the Caribbean*, (London,1985), 118.
[53] Hugh Tinker, *Separate and unequal : India and the Indians in the British Commonwealth, 1920-1950* (Oxford, 1976).
[54] Sherry-Ann Singh, *The Ramayana Tradition and Socio-Religious Change in Trinidad, 1917-1990* (Kingston, 2012).
[55] *Ibid*. 165
[56] Arthur and Juanita Neihoff , *The East Indians in the West Indies.* (Wisconsin,1960).

[57] Morton Klass, *East Indians in Trinidad: A study of cultural persistence*. (New York, 1963).
[58] Kevin Yelvington, *Trinidad Ethnicity* (Knoxville, 1994).
[59] Steven Vertovec, *Hindu Trinidad. Religion, Ethnicity and Socio-EconomicChange*.(London.,1992) and *Hindu Diaspora* (New York, 2009).

(2005), engaged with history to show that East Indians sought to reconstruct cultural elements thereby illustrating that non-Christian Indians were persistent in showing how traditions were enduring in a colonial setting. These studies testify how East Indians from 'peasants' in their every- day lives have sought to reconstitute aspects of their homeland. In her book, *Callalloo Nation* (2005), Aisha Khan highlights the East Indian struggle for representation as the politics of identity which consists of debates over the construction, maintenance and pre-eminence of particular emblems of culture, history and custom.[60] She argues that religion, most notably Hinduism and Islam were defined and made meaningful by local practitioners who used other forms of knowledge such as ideology and experience to create and recreate their religious selves within unfolding contexts of inequality. Also, through the process in reconstructing religious practices, facets of racial identity amongst Indians in Trinidad were produced. She observes that Hindu pujas and Muslim prayers are performances in self-reflection so that one may become aware of his or her identity being formed and acted upon in a heterogeneous society. As well, she links both aspects of religion and race to show how the staging of culture is problematic for Indo Trinidadians caught between attempts to belong in the natural portrait of the "callalloo nation".[61] But while Khan uses oral history and explores the theology of Islam and Hinduism, she does not take into account how labour conditions and the indentureship scheme redefined Islam and Hinduism in that religious leaders had to confront the colonial administration to achieve recognition. Also, she does not explore how the scheme of indentureship racially divided East Indians from Indians from the subcontinent because of the differences in the ways religion was practiced in Trinidad on account of the colonial administration. Arguably, while religious tenets were the same, East

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[60] Aisha Khan, *Callaloo Nation. Metaphors of Race and Religious Identity among South Asians in Trinidad Diaspora*.(Philadelphia, 2005), 2.

[61] *Ibid.* 14 Callaloo is the national dish of Trinidad and Tobago that is a mixture of vegetables and meat. She uses callaloo to describe the ethnic mix in Trinidad

Indian leaders in their respective faiths used religion as a tool to voice concerns affecting East Indians. Lastly, her work does not look at the role of Christian East Indians and how Christianity became a racial marker that led to factionalism within the East Indian community.

This study is concerned with how the idea of an Indian diaspora functioned within the political climate of twentieth century Trinidadian society. As will be seen, Indians who migrated to Trinidad retained their right to repatriation. However as they began to settle in Trinidad and have families of their own in which their children did not have any concept of Indian ancestry, the idea of return no longer became a tangible reality. Yet this phenomenon coexisted with strong psychological identification with the idea of India which created divisions in how Indians in Trinidad responded to twentieth-century political nationalism.

In his study of East Indian groups between 1917 and 1956, Kelvin Singh classified East Indian leaders and organizations after the period of indentureship into two main forces: the "modernizing elite" and the "traditional elite".[62] These classifications are helpful to us. The first group included the East Indians, reaction to colonial policy that challenged their cultural identity. The first group were the East Indians who converted to Christianity and were educated by Canadian Presbyterian missionaries. They included others too who also sought to adapt to the political and cultural environment of a predominantly Creole/Western society. For these, only by working with the colonial administration would the recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages, education, and language be achieved. The second group comprised Pundits and Imams who repudiated the Christian East Indian leaders; they believed that only by preserving existing Hindu and Muslim elements could East Indians be

[62] These definitions can also be seen in Ron Ramdin from *Chattel slave to Wager Earner. A History of Trade Unionism in Trinidad (*London, 1982*)* and Yogendra K. Malik East Indian in Trinidad (Oxford, 1971).

fully integrated in colonial Trinidad society.[63] Singh concludes that the traditional elite in the 1950's led by Bhadase Sagan Maraj and the political mobilization of the Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha racially polarized Trinidad politics and helped to create a climate of overt racism between East Indians and Afro- Trinidadians. Singh writes that the "projection of the alien image of the Indian population by the traditional elite has worked at the political level mostly against the interests if the Indian and working class population and created a biracial system of politics."[64]

His classification of modern elite and traditional elite East Indian representatives does not take into account how issues of class, religion and the Indian nationalist sentiment were intertwined with labour movements in Trinidad. Many of the East Indian leaders, both "traditional" and "modern", were made up of the mercantile class and represented a section of the East Indian population that had moved away from the plantations. Indeed, both religious elders and political leaders in India had a profound impact on East Indian leaders in Trinidad. Often these leaders in India were symbols of strength which marked a solidarity that East Indians in Trinidad had with their homeland. It was the advent of universal suffrage and the enfranchisement of both East Indians and Africans in 1945 that made East Indian politicians become ethnically conscious and therefore seek more representation. Singh's article aptly demonstrates how East Indians participated in anti-colonial nationalism in Trinidad, but his dichotomy of 'modern elite' and 'traditional elites' defines culture and tradition as monolithic forces that were unyielding in a colonial society. This allows him to assume that one's religious background determined his or her political affiliations. However, Singh states that Adrian Cola Rienzi, C.B. Mathura and F.E.M. Hosein were exceptions to East Indian leadership because they did not ally themselves with Christian East Indian

[63] Kelvin Singh. 'Conflict and collaboration : tradition and modernizing Indo-Trinidadian elites 1917-1956',*New West Indian Guide/ Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 70 (1996), 229.

[64] *Ibid*. 247

organizations or Hindu and Muslim elites[65]; rather, their activity in trade unions and labour unrest in the 1930's transcended communal and ethnic politics. Labour movements, strikes on various sugar plantations and ad hoc organizations based on commodity production escape the purview of the history of East Indian organizations because of ethnic exclusivity. These East Indians are seen as exceptional figures at the elite level, who were used to frame discussions on the African Caribbean and Indo Caribbean unity. During the labour riots of 1937, there was a dynamic combination of African and East Indian leadership.[66] Selwyn Ryan understood the Indian cultural fragment as a quest for that faction to be socially integrated and elevated to a status of legitimacy, and that their radicalism was a strategy to combat the total assimilation of all ethnic elements into a culturally neutral creole culture.[67] In both arguments, there is a slippage in the use of labour and ethnicity; whereas at some point these ideas were intertwined, soon one element garnered more importance in the wake of political developments.

The emerging pattern in these studies of East Indians in Trinidad is to try and re-establish an Indo-centric narrative that seeks to chart the development of the ascendancy of an East Indian bourgeois class and their attempts to ensure that their communities were given political recognition. There is an inherent gap between scholars who fixate on the elite level where leaders like Adrian Cola Rienzi take centre stage, and those who examine, or even merely assert, the persistence of a popular cultural conservatism. This thesis argues that one has to look at both levels to see how one influences the other. Economy, politics, anti-colonial sentiment and practices like strikes influence concepts of race and ethnicity and vice versa. Partha Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* and *Subaltern Studies* have been

[65] Singh. 'Conflict and Collaboration', 236.

[66] Brinsely Samaroo, 'Politics of Afro-Indian Relations in Trinidad"in John Gaffar LaGuerre (ed.), *Calcutta to Caroni 2nd Edition* (St. Augustine, 1985), 89.

[67] Selwyn Ryan. ***Race and nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago : a study of decolonization in a multiracial society*. (Toronto, 1972). 8.**

instructive in seeking to understand how one can recover the voices and indeed how individuals and groups become marginalized. Using India as his case study, his work enables an understanding of the rhetoric used by nationalist elites during times of anti-colonial resistance. He argues there is an inner sphere that represents the spiritual realm which bears the essential marks of cultural identity such as language and religion, while the outer sphere represents economy, technology, and the triumph over the West. The intersection of these two spheres is where nationalism takes place and a new nation is imagined. In this project, it is interesting to see how indigenous practices from the Indian homeland like the Panchyat, language and even religion interfaced with economic and political realities of Trinidad. By keeping in mind that elements of the inner and outer sphere are always interacting with each other, it becomes apparent that economic and political reform had an impact on culture where categories of difference were simultaneously becoming undone and hardened. Indeed, questions like who is "elite" and who is "subaltern" and even "collaborator" emerge, and at times it becomes more difficult to identify who or what group occupies these statuses.

In seeking to unravel the problem of the Indian presence in the West Indies, Catherine Hall's article, 'What is West Indian?' is of extreme value. She interrogates the term 'West' by casting it into the politics of identity. She begins by asking "Who is West Indian? and "Who can claim this term?" By privileging the lens of the British metropole, she argues that "being West Indian was neither fixed nor essential."[68] Hall reminds us that "identity is brought into being through discursive or symbolic work, demarcating the self from the other... being West Indian meant being some things and not others." [69] The identities of people residing in the British metropole or in the islands of the West Indies, whether they were planters, politicians administrators or even writers, were being carved by slaves and free

[68] Catherine Hall, "What is West Indian?" in Bill Scwharz (ed.). *West Indian Intellectuals in Britain*" (Manchester, 2003), 31-51.
[69] *Ibid*. 35

people of colour and vice versa. Race and gender- elements of difference were being re-fashioned in both colonial and anti-colonial movements. By extension, the same line of thinking can be applied to Indo- Caribbeans. This becomes apparent in archival sources spanning the early days of the indentured scheme to the late twentieth century. Administrative labels like coolie/Indian/East Indian/West Indian/ and Trinidadian are used interchangeably to place Indians in a West Indian society.[70] The double-takes historians conceptually go through to write about the Indian in the Caribbean mirrors the different levels of identification people of Indian descent utilize when asked about their origins.

In order to capture the full landscape of how Indians in Trinidad were establishing new identities that negotiated aspects of their homeland, it must be understood that Indians both at an elite and subaltern level were manipulating elements of culture such as language and religion during a time of significant political upheaval. Studies on creolization are useful to explain this phenomenon. The term "creole is a combination of two Spanish words: criar, meaning to create, to imagine, to establish, to found, to settle."[71] In Faith Smith's *Creole Recitations,* she examines how the mutable term "creole" was used to describe Trinidad's European/white and African/ black populations. The term 'creole' was attached to whites descended from European born settlers but born in and claiming an attachment to the Americas. With respect to being black and 'creole' this category encompassed Africans in Trinidad in the late nineteenth century, who became "rural labourers, urban clerks or small landholders. They engaged in any number of legal or illegal trades in Port of Spain in the northeast, San Fernando in the southeast, and were employed in both agricultural and

[70] Viranjini Munasinghe's *Callaloo or Tossed Salad?* (Duke, 2000). Munasinghe takes this same finding to seek how leaders were re-defining what it meant to be Trinidadian and not necessarily East Indian. However to a certain extent like Singh she uses visible forms of culture to explore ideas of ethnicity to account for these divisions.
[71] Faith Smith,. *Creole Recitations* (London, 2003), 3.

business professions."[72] By the 1870's, the 'creole' was used to distinguish between Africans who had recently arrived from Sierra Leone and Brazil[73] and by the twentieth century, the term "West Indian" was used in annual reports of Indian immigration to distinguish people of African and Indian descent who worked on sugar cane plantations.

It was Edward Brathwaite's The *Development of Creole Society in Jamaica 1770-1820* (1971) that defined creolization as a practice in order to understand the nature of "a society from the point of view of institutions, its social groupings and the attitudes of individuals and groups to each other and to the institutions of their society."[74] Like Williams' monograph, it stemmed from the conviction that the study of forms, institutions and attitudes of West Indian society during the period of slavery was essential to an understanding of a present which [was] becoming interestingly concerned with racial and cultural identity. According to Brathwaite, "Creolization and the formation of a creole society was the result of a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts as a whole to external metropolitan pressures, and at the same time to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and slave, elite and labourer in a culturally heterogeneous relationship.[75] The interactions of people at various levels and backgrounds and institutions helped constitute new identities. In his article 'Who needs Identity?' Stuart Hall, quoting from Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* suggests that the narrativization of the self occurs in a process in which claim to a historical past is an invention. It does not arise from the so-called return to roots

[72] *Ibid*. 4
[73] *Ibid.* 5
[74] Brathwaite, Edward, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (Oxford, 1971), xiii& 297.
[75] *Ibid*, xv. Regional studies on aspects creolization like Richard E. Burton *Afro-Creole Power. Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean (London, 1997);* Arthur N. Porter *Creoledom A Study of Development of Freetown Society* (Oxford, 1963); Melanie Newton, *The Children of Africa: free people of colour in Barbados, in the age of Emancipation* (Baton Rouge, 2008) are useful understanding how elements of a society at all levels influence the workings of state-craft to represent both an individual and national level of belonging in a society transitioning from colonial rule to independence.

but a coming-to-terms- with our 'routes'.[76] By extension, Indians in Trinidad whether indentured or free, were reacting to and modifying a set of relationships amongst a set of actors in Trinidad, India and Britain. Creolization is the by-product of transnationalism found in the diaspora that is brought about by the contacts between migrants and their host society and an enduring idea of homeland that has both domestic and international consequences. However, these connections are always in a state of flux that allows for both conflict and cooperation.

In the title of this thesis, the decision to use "creole" and "Indian" in the same line is deliberate. It takes into account how Indians created for themselves a new host of identities in reaction to the politico- economic climate of their new homeland. Nigel Bolland's definition of creolization is beneficial. He writes that "creolization is not a homogenizing process, but rather a process of contention between people who are members of social formations and carriers of culture, a process where ethnicity is continually redefined in terms of the relevant oppositions between different social formations at various historical moments."[77] Also, Walton Rodney in the *History of the Guyanese Working People 1881-1905* wrote that "Creolization is an indigenizing experience."[78] In this context, indigeneity refers to an elastic concept of how a set of migrants come to belong to a society in their new homelands. Terms like diaspora, creolization and transnationalism become interchangeable currencies in discourse used to describe the Indian presence in Trinidad and other territories that received Indian migrants.[79] However, these developments are not linear, which are precisely the problems to be faced when trying to incorporate minorities.

[76] Stuart Hall, 'Who needs Identity in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), 4.
[77] Nigel Bolland, 'Creolization and creole societies" in Allistair Hennessy (ed.) *Intellectuals in Twentieth-century Caribbean*" (London, 1992), 87.
[78] Walton Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People 1881-1905* (Baltimore, 1981), 178.
[79] Clifford, 'Diasporas', 310.

From Williams, Brathwaite, Rodney, Chatterjee, and Bolland and Hall, the base line for their arguments is to illustrate how individual members in a colonial territory come to constitute a 'civil society' that was central to the politics of identity in metropolitan and colonial societies. In all their studies, there is a desire to understand how a cultural hegemon was created by imperial masters and how this affected the representation of colonial subjects. In this process, there emerged a set of power dynamics between a group of actors and occurring both at the private/internal and external/public level in the colonial societies of India and the Caribbean. Civil society gives one a glimpse into the way the relationship between colonized and coloniser was modified. 'Civil society' as opposed to 'political society' [80] represents an organic, corpus of non-governmental organisations in which private and public organic arenas like the family, the school, workplace conditions such as the plantation, religious houses of worship and even trade unions are eclectic sites where private individuals regardless of socioeconomic status come to define their political identity. The emergence of the Creole Indian works on an external and individual level. This category of person in the twentieth century was entwined and modified with the very process of settling Indians in Trinidad. Given the intricate relationships between the British administrator, the planter, the Afro-Trinidadian, the Indian nationalist, and the Canadian Presbyterian, the former Indian indentured servant and the free Indian labourer created East Indians organizations and even modified existing forms of civil society to think about notions of homeland. Ultimately, this brought them into contention with each other as they imagined different political trajectories which sought to make the presence of the Indian a most important one.

Sources

[80] Here I am blending a working definition of civil society that is based in the arguments put forth by Jurgen Hambermas and Antonio Gramsci. See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Formation of the Public Sphere: An enquiry into a category of the bourgeois society* (Cambridge, 1992) and Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (California, 2002), 102.

This dissertation is based on a programme of archival research which spanned Britain, Trinidad, India and Canada. Work began in London, with the correspondence between the Colonial Office, India Office and the Government of India, newspapers, pamphlets and private letters. By using this array of material, one will get a sense of the complex power relations that influenced Trinidad.

Colonial and India records deal with the administration of the indentured scheme in Trinidad and Tobago, and how information was circulated amongst governors in Trinidad and officials in England and in India. Most of the files are administration reports from the Protector of Immigrants. These reports pertain to the living conditions of Indians in Trinidad, statistics on how much land East Indians bought for agriculture, the percentage of East Indians in schools as well as the political status of East Indians. These were key indicators in analysing the welfare of Indians abroad. They revealed the continuing relationship India had with Trinidad and how overseas Indians did have a part to play in nationalist movement. Also, these records are rich in illustrating the labour unrest in Trinidad. Emphasis on strikes and labour disturbances reveal how important it was for colonial administrators to maintain peace to safeguard trade in products in sugar and oil. As well, it is interesting to see how the colonial administration dealt with East Indians who worked in the sugar industries.

Files in these archives also comprise of petitions coming from East Indians in Trinidad. They illustrate how East Indians wanted more representation in the colonial government, in the civil service, recognition of East Indian languages such as Hindi and Urdu and the legalization of Muslim and Hindu marriages. At first glance, one sees the indifference of the colonial administration and its reluctance to listen to East Indians; however, they do reveal how East Indians were mobilizing to pressure the colonial administration into recognizing their plight. These records also give a sense of a shifting political and often

dissonant rhetoric East Indians used during their engagement with the colonial authorities to gain more representation in the Trinidad government.

The drawback of Colonial and India Office Records is that they provide little information on the emerging political consciousness of East Indians in Trinidad. Therefore, missionary journals and serials by Canadian missionaries and short-lived journals produced by prominent East Indian businessmen and letters by Indian migrations are especially important in seeking to illustrate how distinct East Indian communities were being conceptualized in Trinidad. In using governmental record, journals and letters reveal one can see how the struggle for East Indian representation in Trinidad took place at both the private and public levels. This study will take into account political debates in India, Trinidad and Britain; as well, it illustrates how missionary activity amongst the Canadian Presbyterians manifested itself in areas such as labour, and education which in turn had an impact on religious practices and even the family. By utilizing the mixture of private letters and correspondence and indeed the circulation of these materials, the concept of transnationalism unfolds and begins to unravel once separate entities. The circulation and transfer of ideas that transnationalism engenders in print media can give one a glimpse of how a leader or a group reacted to their own domestic struggle. From petition, to strike and eventually to a commission that arose from forms of anti-colonialism there was a dialogue amongst those who were concerned about Indians overseas. Hence, episodes of anti-colonial nationalism motivated East Indians to utilize and create alternative public spaces to argue for more political recognition. Concepts of race and ethnicity attached to East Indians were simultaneously breaking down and becoming concretized throughout Trinidad's long road to self-government.

Outline

Chapter One will examine Indian attitudes towards indentureship as well as correspondence between Indian emigrants and India. Chapter Two will look at the efforts of Canadian Presbyterian missionaries and the intellectual tools given to East Indian leaders. These chapters should be read in conjunction with each other so that one can grasp how an East Indian community was being shaped by both domestic and international politics. Chapter Three interrogates the idea of the Creole Indian and illustrates that on both the individual and collective levels, East Indians were coming to grips with Trinidad as being their new home. The prospect of returning to India as no longer being an option coexisted with constitutional reform in Trinidad. What rises to the surface are aspects of identity in which groups of East Indians both entered into inclusivist and exclusivist politics that occurred both within their own community and outside. Chapter Four will look at labour movements in Trinidad and the emphasis on trade unionism. Here the groups of East Indians that were marginalized found new and creative ways to ensure that their grievances were heard. Interestingly, the voiceless occupied a cornerstone in Indian nationalist struggles. The efforts of Adrian Cola Rienzi and other East Indian organizations are of special interest because studies of labour struggles in Trinidad demonstrate how the definition of an East Indian culture adapted to turbulent times. Finally, Chapter 5 will investigate the testimonies given during the Moyne Commission. These documents by Afro-Trinidadian nationalists, personnel in British colonial administration, Indian nationalists and East Indian leaders illustrate different political futures for East Indian communities.

Argument

This dissertation explores how the interplay between labour and culture defined the creation of an East Indian civil society in Trinidad and Tobago. The emergence of the East Indian civil society in Trinidad and Tobago is based on the concept of the 'Creole

Indian'. On both a personal and organizational level, this category of Indian can be found in the confluence and contention of British Imperial history and anti-colonial resistance. The creation of an East Indian community arose out of transnational tensions between planters, British colonial administrators, Canadian missionaries, and both Afro-Trinidadian and Indian nationalists. In the intricate relationship between the end of indenture and nationalism and constitutional reform, discourses on race and ethnicity were created wherein locations like the plantation, the mosque, the trade union and temple became key sites for Indians in Trinidad to create a language to demand civic rights. These movements were not linear. East Indian organizations that emerged from these developments were often in disagreement with what form their political and social outlook should take. The process by which East Indians became indigenized to Trinidad was marked by the re-imagination of the Indian diasporic homeland during times of political upheaval. This reality simultaneously made the East Indian in Trinidad both an insider and an outsider to the politics of nationalism in that island and the West Indies in the era of decolonisation.

Chapter 1

Indigenizing Indian Migrants 1884-1917

"The [immigrants] were a cheerful contented lot, of very fair physique and being of low caste should make good labourers as they are accustomed to field work"[1]

Figure 2: "East Indian Festival". Source: T.B. Jackson *Book of Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1904), 26 [2]

I. Introduction

On October 30, 1884, nearly 6,000 Indian labourers from various agricultural estates took part in the annual Shia Muslim festival of "Hosay".[3] In this time of revelry, homage was paid

[1] Protector of Immigrants Report on Immigration in Trinidad. 1905-1906. C.O. 295/436.T.N.A/U.K.

[2] L.O. Innis described East Indian festivals in his section on Trinidad superstitions located in T.B. Jackson, *Book of Trinidad* (Port of Spain, 1904). While Innis did not specifically call the photo depicting the festival as the annual Muhurram festival, the tadjdhas or pillars depicted in the photo indicate that it is the annual Muhurram celebration.

[3] In Trinidad the Hosay (sometimes Hosein) festival is the Muharram Festival celebrated in India. For the purpose of this thesis, the term Hosay will be used as this incident is commonly referred to as the "Hosay Massacre"

to Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad who perished at Karbala. Tadjahs or model tombs were built high and painted with bright colours. Participants then proceeded throughout the various estates and villages in rural Trinidad gathering those playing Hosay. Revellers included Hindu, Christian, and Muslim Indians, as well as African Creoles who delighted in beating their drums and haka sticks. In defiance of the Ordinance[4] that had prohibited festival processions into the urban centres of Port of Spain and San Fernando, the Hosay celebrants approached the outskirts of San Fernando. There, at the threshold between Les Efforts Gates and San Fernando, mixed bands met Captain Arthur Wybrow Baker, the Inspector Commandant of the police and his battalion of Irish, Indian and Afro-Creole officers ready to read the Riot Act and open fire on those who dared cross the boundary. Sookoo, a Hindu principal headman from the Phillipine Estate, confronted the police force. He urged his friends to cross into San Fernando. He shouted in his vernacular tongue "that there would be a mutiny!.. If there is evil, let evil come!"[5] Amidst the crowd of Indian celebrants, Afro-Trinidadians who also took part in the celebration screamed, "Go on, your countryman is telling you lie; they are not going to shoot you!"[6] Firm in their conviction that the festival only fostered riotous behaviour and mischief amongst coolie and Creole[7] labourers, the police officers fired a volley of bullets into the crowd. Festival participants threw down their blood-stained tadjahs and scattered into the thick sugar cane fields. After a second volley, thirteen people lay dead and thirty-one were seriously wounded. In the

[4]British Parliamentary Papers (BPP). 1885, LII, (*Correspondence respecting the Recent Coolie Disturbances in Trinidad at the Mohurram Festival,* by Sir H. W. Norman , Signed Commander J. Scott Bushe, Colonial Secretary), p. 3. This Ordinance was based on similar events in British Guiana in 1882, when violence broke out between the colonial authorities and participants in the annual Muharram observances. The Ordinance stated that the Governor reserved the right to apply the regulations to every plantation or public highway, and such regulations were to be published in the *Royal Gazette*. In 1884 the regulations were published in Hindustani and other dialects such as Kaithi.

[5]*Ibid.* (Statement from Mewa interpreter from Immigration Department), p.16.For a complete set of witness statements and articles on the Hosay massacre of 1884. See Kelvin Singh *The Bloodstained Tombs* (London, 1988).

[6] *Ibid.* (Statement of Ramdeen, shopkeeper of San Fernando), p.30.

[7]In this report the term Coolies refers to Indian labourers and Creoles to Afro-Trinidadians

aftermath, the wounded were sent to San Fernando Hospital and George Andrew, an Afro-Trinidadian was sentenced to six months hard labour for inciting the coolies.[8]

The Indian witnesses who gave accounts of the massacre included Muddar Buccus, a "Mohametan- free coolie"; "Mukhoo, a Hindoo- free coolie"; Gootee, a Mohametan-indentured coolie; Dulloo, a "Mohametan formerly Hindoo- indentured coolie"; "Mattadeen, a Christian indentured coolie"; "Mulloor Ram, a Hindoo -free coolie"; Sheikh Wagur, a "Mahometan- free coolie" as well as coolie shopkeepers, Balgopal, Ramdine, Budda and Samball Singh. [9] Prior to this fateful event, groups of Indians had presented conflicting petitions on the merits of holding the Hosay festival. A group of Muslim shopkeepers in San Fernando had petitioned the Protector Immigrants to stop the annual Hosay celebration; the festival was deemed abhorrent to their faith, as the tadjahs promoted idol worship, and branded the Muslim community as troublemakers. Moreover, the festival fostered quarrels and violence that would disrupt the "peaceful relations and kindness between Muslims and the colonial authorities in Trinidad." [10] On the other hand there was, Sookoo, who along with thirty-one signatories to the other petition claimed that the suppression of the Hosay would tarnish the respect of faith guaranteed to all subjects residing in the wide domains of the English Government.[11] This roster and the mixture of festival participants indicated that less than fifty years after the beginning of indentureship in Trinidad, it was clear that in significant ways, Indians were becoming Trinidadians, and African Trinidadians were participating in Indian culture.

[8] *Ibid*.(Statement Fredrick Scott, Police Constable, San Fernando), p.19.
[9] *Ibid*. (List of Witnesses), p. 50.
[10]*Ibid*.(Enclosure number 4 in no.10. Groups of Muslim shopkeepers to Sir Sanford Freeling, Governor General of Trinidad), p.76.
[11] *Ibid.* (Enclosure 1 in No, 6 Petition of certain Immigrants on Immigrant's Festival Regulations), p.8.

Hosay celebrations were observed in places as far afield as British Guiana, Surinam, Jamaica, Fiji, Mauritius and Natal.[12] In Trinidad, Hosay offers one insight into the processes by which the arrival of Indian indentured labourers added to the multiracial and multi-ethnic fabric nature of nineteenth century colonial Trinidad. Moreover, the evidence relating to the Muharram Massacre also reveals an economic aspect that complicates the conceptual frameworks that seek to explain how Indians fitted into the social, economic and political fabric of Trinidad society. Prabhu Mohupatra's analysis of how customs in India were transported to the Caribbean between 1880 and 1920, argues that the popularity and peculiarity of the Hosay/Muhurram festival in the Caribbean was borne out of the desire for Indians to create their own communities in a response to the anomie of the plantation regime. Through the processional marches across many estates, the Indians manipulated already existing spaces and gave them new meaning. Hence, the festival became a vehicle for articulating their distinct cultural identity that was refracted through labour reform on plantations.[13]

The list of witnesses supports Walter Look Lai's argument that Indians gradually transcended their status as sojourners to become permanent settlers. While briefly looking at Hosay, Look Lai argues that Indians found themselves between the forces of creolization and assimilation. He writes: "They were resisting one or more than the other or partially accommodating both, in a dialectical process dictated by their own internal development as a community, or by external forces at large in a society at any given moment in time. The process was not simple nor uniform or static."[14] Characteristics of ethnicity religion that were

[12]Frank Korom, *Hosay in Trinidad. Muharram Performances in an Indo-Caribbean Diaspora* (Philadelphia, 2003), 5. In his detailed study of Muhurram observances in Iran, India and Trinidad, Korom notes that in India communal riots between Shia and Sunni factions of Islam often erupted during Muhurram celebrations. He uses the term "decreolization" as opposed to syncretism to emphasize "the conscious decisions made by human actors" to see the rich historical transformation of this festival.

[13] Prabhu Mohupatra, " 'Following Custom' Representations of Community among Indian Immigrant Labour in the West Indies", *IRSH* , 51 (2006), 186.

[14] Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour Caribbean Sugar. Chinese and Indian Migrants to British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore, 1993), 255.

indicators of identity with the Indian homeland- such as caste and religion- mutated as Indians crossed the dark waters or "Kala Pani".[15] These changes were then fused by changing labour conditions in various industries. K. O. Lawrence argues that the "first stage in the emergence of a settled Indian population was necessarily the appearance alongside the mass of Indian immigrants either under indenture or with their indentures completed who had abandoned either informally the notion of returning to India."[16] In turn, new categories had to be created, and recreated to characterize an "Indian community". These new forms of organization took into account not only religion but also class, as Indians gradually moved off the plantations and became free labourers engaging in private enterprises.

This chapter examines many aspects of Indian responses to their host society, as they gradually came to see themselves as permanent settlers rather than transients. Indian migration to Trinidad was a source of vexation among planters, the colonial administration and the Trinidad's Workingman's Association (T.W.A.) that was comprised of free Afro-Trinidadians. This problem was then conditioned by the struggle for home rule in India in which the plight of Indians abroad became a cornerstone in nationalist campaigns. As well, Indian responses to their new homeland arose out of the predicament they found themselves in, which was characterized by relocation and dispossession.

This chapter uses a variety of sources to trace how the contours of an "East Indian community" were shaped in Trinidad between 1897 and 1917. The reports from the Royal Commissions of 1897, 1910 and 1915 provide us with the testimony of a number of actors among them being planters, colonial administrators, Afro-Trinidadians and Indian statesmen. I used official correspondence in the form of annual reports from the Protector of Immigrants

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[15] Anil Persaud, 'Transformed Overseas' in Marcel van der Linden and Prabu Mohupatra (eds.), *Labour Matters: Towards Global Histories :Studies in Honour of Sabyasachi Bhattacharya* (New Delhi, 2009), 22-56. See also David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, *Across the Dark Waters Ethnicity and Indian Identity in the Caribbean* (London, 1996).

[16] K. O. Lawrence, *A Question of Labour: Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana 1875-1917* (London, 1994), 385.

in Trinidad, as well as letters from colonial administrators. Woven into this view from above were many petitions and letters from Indian migrants and groups in India who sought to reform or end indentureship. From these sources, one is able to grasp the human and tangible experience of indentureship. One conundrum for the historian of indenture is to decide when and how to use labels such as "coolie", "Indian" or "East Indian". I have decided not to apply our contemporary usages but to work with the language of the sources, seeking always to be as specific as possible as to what they actually meant in their context.

II. Creating Indian Settlements

Both the planters and the colonial government had mutual interests in the welfare of Trinidad's sugar cane industry. Each party agreed that the labour provided by Indian migrants was invaluable not only to the sugar industry, but also to the development of other enterprises in agriculture. W. G. M. Sewell's *Ordeal of Free Labour in the West Indies* (1861) painted Trinidad as an unfinished island that needed to be brought under the "dominion of man".[17] Of 1,287,600 acres of land only 60,000 acres were under cultivation; 30,000 acres were in cane, 7,000 acres in cacao and the remainder devoted to ground provisions and pasture.[18] Thus, sustainable and cheap labour was vital to develop the island's agricultural resources.

The indentured scheme was a form of labour management, crafted by planters who wanted to hold onto their enterprises in sugar. Indentureship was an isolated apparatus that had its own rules, regulations and separate staff that quickly shuffled Indian migrants to their respective estates. The immigrant worked as an unfree labourer by engaging in five one-year contracts, or he paid a monthly tax for the return passage subject to criminal sanctions if he failed to complete the contract. According to Bridget Brereton, by 1854, the immigrant had to work an additional five years, thereby making his time of indenture ten years in order to qualify for the return passage. Later, the Immigration Ordinance stipulated that an immigrant

[17] W. M. G. Sewell, *The Ordeal of Free Labour in the British West Indies* (New York, 1861), 101.
[18] *Ibid.* 101, 108

on arrival had to serve an initial indenture for three years with a single employer. After a three- year contract, the immigrant could reindenture himself for two further one-year contracts, or he could buy out his remaining two years by a lump sum. Furthermore, in order to qualify for a free return passage, the Indian had to work further contracts or pay an annual tax.[19] In sum, successive contracts fixed the Indian immigrant on the estate. Therefore, Immigration officials and planters were especially interested in the number of Indians who were prosecuted for labour offences such as desertion and absconding.

It must be noted that indentureship displaced the Afro-Trinidadian working masses who still worked on plantations and other skilled jobs, but who demanded that wages be equal to what their choice of employment was. However, given the change to wage labour, the supply of Creole labour was diminishing. According to Sewell, coolies worked on average nineteen and a half days a month, and received $5.35; on the other hand, the Creole of Trinidad worked sixteen and half-days and received $5.91.[20] Indentureship represented sound guidelines in political economy where the cost of labour could be brought down through the indentured contract. To combat arguments that Indian migration incited feelings of jealousy among the Creole population, Sewell argued that indentureship mirrored other patterns of immigration. For example, in the United States, groups of Irish labourers were brought over to develop the country's frontiers. This jealousy was the product of ideas of monopoly and protection that reeked of "the monstrous pretension that the West Indies were the sole property of the negro, whose equanimity must be by the presence of no other people and that colonies capable of sustaining twenty million inhabitants must be reserved as an exclusive inheritance for less than a million descendants of the African race."[21] Sewell's comments reveal that the cost of labour economically divided Indians and Africans, and that

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[19]Bridget Brereton, *A History of Modern Trinidad. 1783-1962* (Kingston, 1981), 101-102.
[20] Sewell, *The Ordeal of Free Labour*, 127.
[21]*Ibid*. 131-132

the decision of Creole labourers to leave plantations meant that in his eyes, they forfeited a claim to their sovereignty over the island. Socially, there were occasional instances of a kind of class or colonial subject solidarity, but there were also important tensions which would come to haunt the politics of Trinidad.

In 1870, the scheme of selling Crown Lands to Indians initiated by Governor Arthur Gordon, later Lord Stanmore, loosened the firm hold planters had on their Indian workforce. It allowed Indians to become entrenched members of Trinidad's labour force with long-term benefits for developing industries, other than sugar. Gordon served as Governor in Trinidad from 1866 to 1870 following his time as governor in New Brunswick, Canada (1861-1868). He then travelled to Mauritius (1870-1864) and Fiji (1875-1882) and New Zealand (1880-1882) and finished in Ceylon (1883-1890).[22] Lawrence Brown argues that Gordon's imperial career gives one a sense as to how the system of indentureship was managed on an international scale that connected disparate parts of the globe.[23] Gordon transplanted his practical knowledge of indentured labour from one colony to another, and shaped the experiences of Indians who migrated to the colonies in which he served.

His policies regarding land reform are most significant. He was appalled at the manner in which his predecessor in Trinidad, the acting governor Manners Sutton in Trinidad dealt with the number of squatters on the island. Squatting appeared to interrupt the development of Trinidad's economic resources. According to J. K. Chapman, squatters were made up of free African slaves who lived a nomadic lifestyle in remote and heavily forested land, planting only quickly harvested crops such as maize and rice.[24] Through careful surveys of available land in the colony, Gordon transformed scattered "illegal occupations into

[22] J.K. Chapman, *Arthur Hamilton Gordon, First Lord of Stanmore* (Toronto, 1964), ii.
[23] Lawrence Brown, 'Intercolonial migration and the refashioning of indentured labour. Arthur Gordon in Trinidad, Mauritius and Fiji' in David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.) *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2006), 205.
[24] Chapman, *Arthur Hamilton Gordon*, 70.

systematic consolidated legal holdings to improve the conditions of squatters by making land available to those who wanted to engage in agriculture."[25] In 1869, Gordon's scheme was realized when a group of twenty-five Indians, eligible for return passages, offered to remain in Trinidad if given free grants of land. Soon after, an additional cohort of forty-five Indians petitioned Gordon for grants of land.[26]

Gordon's initiative is significant because it set the precedent for Indians to forego their right to a return passage as a means to buy Crown land; in other words, it paved the way for them to become small proprietors. The cost of land was roughly £1-2 per acre.[27] Cultivation of land entailed hard labour, but through attempts to humanize the landscape, Indians profited from financial gains that culminated in their ability to move away from the agricultural industry. Between 1898 and 1917, reports from Crown land surveyors indicated that in Trinidad, there was an estimated 1,195,000 acres of land, of which a little over 300,000 acres were devoted to sugar, cocoa, coffee, coconuts, rice and ground provisions, while an estimated 900,000 acres remained uncultivated.[28] In 1893, Surgeon-General D.W. D. Comins who made a tour of Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica and St. Lucia to collect evidence on the status of Indian migrants, noted that "free coolies" had become proprietors of cocoa estates and coconut estates; cab proprietors and carters; rice cultivators in lagoon lands; milk sellers, market gardeners, goldsmiths and silversmiths; hucksters and pedlars; grass

[25] *Ibid.* 73
[26] *Ibid*. 80
[27] Lawrence, *A Question of Labour*, 394. In Trinidad between 1898 and 1917 the upset price of Crown land was purchased at £1,10s to £2,10s an acre. Figures derived from the Blue Books Annual Reports for Colony of Trinidad and Tobago. For Indians who wished to commute their right to a return passage after serving a period of ten years of indenture, a sum of £5 was given.
[28] Annual Reports or Blue Books from the Crown Colony of Trinidad and Tobago, 1898-1917. Section Y Cultivated and Uncultivated Land, Wages, Produce and Stock. These reports do not make any racial distinction as to who was buying land. Moreover, Annual Reports of Immigrants in the early twentieth century provide details on how many East Indians and West Indians (Afro-Trinidadians) were in the sugar industry and give the exact acreage that is devoted to specialized cultivation (e.g. limes, ground provisions, peas, fruit).

sellers, road makers, and fishermen. More so, they became an important element in skilled labour in sugar factories and cocoa estates.[29]

Areas such as the Oropouche Lagoon, the Nariva and the Caroni Swamps were drained and cultivated so that a variety of crops could be grown. The major lagoon crops were rice, black-eye peas, corn, watermelon and tomatoes while the minor lagoon crops were green vegetables such as melongenes and ochroes, herbs, and sweet potatoes. The Oropouche Lagoon and the Nariva Swamp are in the county of Victoria and St. Patrick and cover the wards of Siparia and South Naparima. Villages in this area include Penal, Debe, Barrackpore, Monkey Town, Penal Rock Quinam, San Francique and Bien Venue. These settlements were largely marshy areas and teemed with harmful insects such as mosquitoes and sand flies, vermin and venomous reptiles such as the dreaded mappipire snake. Settlers who drained these areas risked getting malaria, dysentery and other bronchial diseases. Their work however, meant economic self-sufficiency.[30]

A similar trend of encouraging Indians who had completed their term of indenture to become permanent settlers also occurred in British Guiana. However, in comparison to Trinidad, the rate of purchasing land was much slower. Although there was an abundance of territory, the lack of infrastructure made it difficult for Indians migrants in British Guiana to acclimatize to their new surroundings. In 1914, inspectors Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal from the Government of India visited British Guiana and explored the Indian settlements of Huist Dieren, Helena, Whim, Bush Lot and Maria's Pleasure as well as villages along the rivers and creeks such as Mahaicony and Cotton Tree. Both men noted that very little land in the colony could be occupied unless it was properly drained and irrigated. McNeill and Lal agreed that irrigation and drainage of land that was suitable for agriculture should be

[29] Surgeon-General D.W.D.Comins, *Indian Emigration to Trinidad* (Bengal, 1893), 17.
[30] St. Patrick Cane Farming Committee. West Indian Royal Commission (W.I.R.C. 1938-39). C.O. 950/817. T.N.A/U.K. (The National Archives, United Kingdom).

maintained by the government.[31] Walter Rodney notes that Indian indentured labourers "had to face up to the steady diet of mud and water in the continuance dams and the cleaning of trenches."[32] Flood and drought threatened the livelihoods of settlers along the Demerara, and periodically devastated livestock, crops, roads, dams and the health of the people. However, the profitable production of, rice, coffee, limes and cocoa gave some recompense.

Unlike the other British West Indian islands, the sugar industry in British Guiana was dependent on the maintenance of an extensive drainage system. A coastal belt of British Guiana that is seven miles long contains nearly all the cultivable land in the colony. This belt was originally at, or below sea level, and was laid out by the Dutch in areas of two to four thousand feet frontage. It was extended inland between parallel boundaries, for varying distances by as much as seven miles and terminated in the back dam. This layout replicated the coast line for about 150 miles between the Courantyne and Essequibo rivers.[33] The sugar industry in Guiana was mostly confined to this area and constant vigilance was needed to keep the sea out As well, the volume of fresh water that accumulated on the landward side had to be continuously kept in check. Hence an intricate system of trenches or open drains that comprised sluices was constructed in the sea wall to maintain proper drainage during high tide or heavy rainfall. Coupled with the agreement to sell Crown land, and the constant need for labour to maintain proper infrastructure, the processes by which Indians were settled in Guiana was indeed more difficult as the competition for land and resources was more acute than in Trinidad.

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[31] *Publication of Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal report on the Indians in the Colonies.* Department of Commerce and Industry(C&I). Emigration Branch. 1915. Part A. Proceedings 3-36. Government of India (G.O.I) National Archives of India (N.A.I)

[32] Walter Rodney, *The History of the Guyanese Working People 1881-1905* (Baltimore, 1981) ,3. See also Clem Seecharan, *A Tiger in the Stars: The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana*. (London, 1997) and R.W.Beachey, *The British West Indies Sugar Industry in the late 19th Century* (Oxford, 1958). All authors provide in full detail the extensive work that was needed to drain the lands in British Guiana.

[33] Beachey, *British West Indies*, 95-96.

Lawrence notes that between 1901 and 1915, over 19,055 acres of land were granted to Indians in commutation for free passages. [34]In areas such as Sangre Grande, Cunapo, New Grant, and Siparia[35] where the Crown's holdings were abundant, Indians transformed the land into multiple centers of production of agricultural goods where they planted and marketed rice, maize, ground provisions, plantains, breadfruit, mangoes, tomatoes and cucumbers. By 1917, it was estimated that over 91,044 acres of land had been brought under cultivation. Principal products such as cocoa, sugar cane, rice, corn, ground provisions, coffee, coconuts, fruit, peas and limes and mixed cultivation were noted in annual reports on the economic activities of free Indians in the colony.[36] In 1915, W. H. Coombs, the Protector of Immigrants remarked that "East Indians are to a great extent engaged in the industry and it affords them a means of livelihood."[37] Indian settlements in Trinidad were visible signs that Indian migrants were transcending their status as temporary sojourners and becoming permanent residents who, by virtue of their labour, were enhancing the development of Trinidad's agricultural industries.

Many Indian peasants had kitchen gardens attached to their dwellings and produced green vegetables for their own consumption.[38] Poultry farms were also established enabling them to sell chickens in the villages.[39] Amongst unindentured or free Indians, cane farming became popular. Réné De Verteuil, president of the Cane Farmer's Association, testified that the coolies readily took to cane farming. He stated "they [coolies] did not at first, but they have now started, and I should not be astonished if they beat the others. Those coolies get together, and one man will get seven or eight coolies to work for him and feed them and not

[34] Lawrence, *A Question of Labour*, 396.
[35] *Ibid.* 396
[36] *Annual Reports of Immigrants. Trinidad 1917*. 1918.Part B Proceedings 12-14. Dept. C&I. Emigration Branch.G.O.I./N.A.I.
[37] *Annual Report Trinidad Immigration 1913-1914*. 1914.Part B Proceedings. 38-40. Dept.C&I. Emigration Branch. G.O.I/ N.A.I
[38] Memorial of East Indian Advisory Board. (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939). C.O. 950/807. T.N.A/U.K.
[39] *Ibid.*

give them wages at all. That is how the coolies work among themselves. It will be for the benefit of the colony. I do not know whether it will be satisfactory to the coolies the head man employs, but I suppose we have nothing to do with that."[40]One Indian peasant named Boodhoosingh of Patna Estate took advantage of the sale of Crown lands and became a wealthy cocoa proprietor. He also became a contractor and employed indentured and free Indians and even Creoles to clear the thick wooded acres in order to turn them over to cocoa production.[41] With the opening up of Crown lands, unindentured immigrants entered into a new environment where they shared space with other immigrants such as former Chinese indentured labourers and most importantly, Trinidadians of African descent. The latter group was derived mostly from freed slaves, but also from a small number of Africans who came as indentured labourers or who were captives liberated in Trinidad from slave ships captured by the Royal Navy.

III. Planters, the mobility of the Indians and the colonial administration

Given the rate at which Indians were becoming permanent settlers and the rapid development of Crown lands in Trinidad, a conflict emerged between the planters and the administration on the merits of indentureship. The planters had a short-term outlook on the efficiency of indentured labour, while the colonial administration sought to absorb the successive cohort of Indian labourers into the larger labour force with a view to develop the island's other resources. The internal crisis of labour management in Trinidad was funneled into larger debates on the future of the sugar cane industry in which the assessment of Indian emigration throughout the Empire was of great concern. These debates culminated in two Royal Commissions being convened in 1897 and 1910 in which planters, workers in

[40] BPP.1898, L, (*Report on WIRC,* Appendix C Vol.II Part IV, Réné deVerteuil), p.275
[41] BPP.1910, XXVII, (*Emigration from the Crown Colonies and Protectorates Part III*, F. Gibbon, Protector of Immigrants), p.136. See also the profile on Boohhosingh in Rosabelle Seesaran, *From Caste to Class the Social Mobility of the Indo-Trinidadian community, 1870-1917*(Port of Spain, 2003) .

immigration, colonial administrators and private individuals were given the chance to air their concerns.

Between 1879 and 1908, over 131,618 Indian labourers were introduced to Trinidad; of these, only 25, 210 were repatriated back to India and by 1910, the Indian population in Trinidad stood at 102,439. Moreover, by this time, 92,558 were free labourers while only 10,774 remained indentured. [42] In 1910, the Protector of Immigrants G. Guppy described indentured labour as merely the "nucleus that provided a form of cheap and sustainable supply of labour to further cultivate the unused back lands in the colony."[43] On one hand, Indian migration was not a permanent solution to Trinidad's labour problems; however, Guppy's use of the term 'nucleus' warrants attention in that Indian migrants were at the centre of a new workforce in Trinidad that was constantly evolving in tandem with outer forces.

At this time, most planters were absentee proprietors, as it was more cost-efficient to run their estates from London, England or have attorneys and overseers manage their businesses. As well, access to capital in London would make transactions easier. James Grieg, who lived in Glasgow and owned Brechin Castle and Caroni commented that "in London, we are posted up in everything in the world. Anyone living there [Trinidad] - well, he vegetates to a certain extent, he gets rusty, and there has been no improvement made but what has been from home. And we who are at home know the difficulty of getting our people out there to

[42] *Ibid. (*'Reports of Protector of Immigrants .1897-1908 by G.Guppy'), p. 127. Annual Reports from the Protector of Immigrants in Trinidad also note the amount of indentured and unindentured labourers on the estates.

[43] *Ibid.* ('On the Labour Question in Trinidad'. Report submitted to Governor of Trinidad Henry Moore Jackson from R.H, McCarthy, Edgar Agostini, John Morton, H.C. Stone, S. Henderson, John Dennis Sellier,Peter Abel and Jas Mungal), p. 149.

adopt improvements."[44] Testimonies by certain planters given at the 1897 West Indian Royal Commission were characterized by a sense of loss at a time when beet sugar competition threatened West Indian cane sugar with extinction. Hamel Smith who lived in Trinidad as a sugar proprietor, stated: "I cannot tell you very much of sugar because I went out of sugar years ago. Sugar ruined me about 35 years ago and I have nothing more to do with it since except coming in contact with my planter friends in Mincing Lane."[45] He reminisced that he spent his boyhood and grew up with Mr Philip Bernard who had started the Colonial Company which was a conglomerate of sugar estates in both Trinidad and British Guiana.

However, the financing of the sugar cane industry in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries was problematic. The market for colonial sugar exports and West Indian sugar produce was being suffocated by continental bounties being placed on beet sugar production. R.W. Beachey notes that between 1884 and 1900, imports of sugar into the United Kingdom were from beet rather than West Indian cane sugar.[46] The West India Committee based in Glasgow represented the interests of sugar cane proprietors, and it denounced the bounties being placed on beet production by the British government as a breach of the principles of free trade.[47]

France, Austria and Germany were all capitalizing on beet sugar as this cheaper method of sugar production had certain advantages. For example, in Germany, the pulp from beet sugar aided the cattle food industry and provided considerable employment for a large working population.[48] In fact, in 1896 the total value of sugar exported from Trinidad came up to only £ 773,000.

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[44] BPP.1898, L, (*Report on WIRC*, Appendix C Vol.I Part I James Grieg, Glasgow), p. 59
[45] *Ibid*. (Hamel Smith), p.63
[46] Beachey, *British West Indies,* 142.
[47] BPP. L, 1897 (*Report on WIRC* Appendix C, Vol. II, Part IV. Hon. G.T. Fenwick and Messrs. W. Sanderson, G.White and S. Henderson) Mr. Fenwick,), p. 243. For a full account of the sugar bounties question see *Correspondence with West India Committee on the sugar bounty question1872-1877* (Great Britain Foreign Office, 1877) and West India Committee Circular on the Question of Sugar bounties 1896 C.O. 295/367. T.N.A./U.K and R.W. Beachey, *The British West Indies*, ch.8
[48] Beachey, *The British West Indies*, 145.

In order to alleviate the effects of the sugar bounties, many small sugar estates were amalgamated, and sugar manufacturing was abandoned for cane cultivation. A central cane factory like the Usine St. Madeleine was seen as a solution. This cane factory, which was equipped with new machinery such as the vacuum pan which produced a finer sugar, was built to offset manufacturing costs. Estates like Columbia, (Cedros), Plaisance (Savonetta), Concord (Pointe- a Pierre) Fairfield and New Grant (Savana Grande), Otaheite and Bellevue (Oroupouche), Union and Marbella (Pointe- a Pierre,) Laventille (near Port of Spain), River and Cascade (Diego Martin), Woodbrook (Port of Spain,), Aripero and Nelson (Oroupouche)[49] were either closed down and rented out in small lots or switched from sugar to coconut production as in the case of Columbia, Otaheite, Aripero and Nelson. Moreover, there was a decline in demand for West Indian muscavado sugar as confectioners preferred the semi-refined beet sugar.

In 1896, a new Immigration Ordinance was drafted to consolidate immigration laws dating from 1854. This legislation intensified the pressures that the planters were under, due to the sugar bounties. It was problematic because it held the planters to the promise they had previously entered into with Indian migrants when they signed the labour contract for indentureship. It should be noted that most of the sections were lifted from the 1891 British Guiana ordinance, as British Guiana was receiving the largest supply of Indian immigrants in the British West Indies. Sections included the duties of those who worked in the administrative structure of Immigration such as the Protector of Immigrants, Sub-Inspectors and Inspector of Assistants. Other sections indicated that routine inspections of estates were to be carried out, that marriages were to be registered and that medical services were to be guaranteed to each Indian immigrant.[50]

[49] BPP. L, 1898 (*Report on WIRC* Appendix C Vol.II Part IV. Hon. G.T. Fenwick and Messrs. W. Sanderson, G.White and S. Henderson, Mr. Fenwick), p. 243.
[50] Immigration Ordinance 1896. Napier Broome to Joseph Chamberlain, 1896. C.O 295/372.T.N.A/U.K. This letter contains a complete set of sections taken from the British Guiana Ordinance 1891

Of key importance was how wage rates amongst indentured labourers were regulated. The contract explicitly stipulated that:

> an emigrant would earn 11 annas and 11 1/2 pie a day for each day's work. Such work is regulated by wages paid to the unindentured labourers resident on the same plantation, or should there be, in the opinion of the Protector not a sufficient number of unindentured labourers to form a standard then the indentured labourer is paid at the same rate as unindentured labourers on neighbouring plantations, such rate being not less than the minimum rate paid for time work.[51]

Economic fluctuations of the sugar industry and the steady tide of Indian workers moving off the plantations made the rate of wages, and the size of tasks inconsistent with the terms of the contract Indian indentured immigrants had signed. In the 1897 Trinidad Immigration Ordinance, the introduction of section 66/67 was critical. Unlike British Guiana, section 66/67 was unique to Trinidad because it fixed the wage rate of 6*d* or 25 cents that had to be guaranteed to all estate indentured labourers. If those Indians under contract did not earn the stipulated wage rate, the overseer of the plantation would be denied future workers. While this proviso did exist in the 1870 Ordinance, this "dead clause" came into force in 1897. It stated as follows:

> Where it shall be shown by the returns to be made under the provisions of this Ordinance, or it shall be otherwise made to appear to the satisfaction of the Protector, than fifteen of the adult male immigrants indentured to any plantation have during the twelve months ending on the thirtieth day of September earned a less amount of wages than will give an average for each of such immigrants of six pence for every day during twelve months, it shall not be lawful for the Protector to make any further allotment to such plantation from the immigrants the year next ensuing after such thirtieth day of September. Provided always that it shall be lawful for the governor to relieve any plantation from the operation of this section when good reason is shown to his satisfaction for a larger proportion of the adult make wages than will give such six pence a day.[52]

In a private letter to Charles W. Mitchell, who had previously held the office of Protector of Immigrants in Trinidad from 1883 to 1896, and who had experience of the indentured scheme in British Guiana and Fiji, Lord Stanmore, who, at this time, was retired and living in England, reflected on the new piece of legislation. By looking at the number of indentured

[51] 1896 Contract for recruiters authorized to offer for intending emigrants to Trinidad C.O.295/374 T.N.A/U.K.. By 1910 the wage rate had increased from 12 annas or 6 pie a day.
[52] Trinidad Acts, 1870 C.O 297/8 T.N.A/U.K.

immigrants and unindentured immigrants on estates belonging to the Colonial Company, Norman Lamont, Charles Tennant and others, Stanmore wrote: "Now the question suggests itself by whom was the crop chiefly secured: By the indentured or the unindentured labourer? If both worked equally well it is clear that the indentured labourer is inadequately paid. But if the latter worked less well, why are less efficient labourers annually imported at great cost to the colony and the planter?"[53]

Given the financial constraints of planters, reactions to the revival of this section drove a wedge between the planter communities in Trinidad as many estates would be deprived of its secured labour. A. P. Marryat, who worked as a planter, proprietor and manager in the immigration system for thirty years, concluded the resolution of Governor of Trinidad Napier Broome, to endorse the introduction of this clause which was the culmination of years of lax regulation of the immigration system that led to an unpleasant friction between the Immigration Department and the planting community.[54] For example, Marryat cited the wage returns for Brechin Castle estate that employed 114 indentured immigrants; he argued that if the estate complied with section 66, it would have closed down, for more than 15% of its workers had failed to earn the minimum wage.[55] In fact, by 1900, ten estates had been closed by this section, and by 1910, estates such as Orange Grove, Perseverance, Woodford Lodge, Brothers and Williamsville, Tarouba, and Harmony Hall were also affected.[56] For Broome, the decision to revive this section was in order to "reserve full powers to the governor [and] to deprive any estate in operation when good reason is

[53] Lord Stanmore to Charles Mitchell 1896. C.O 295/374. T.N.A/U.K. In the Annual Reports of Immigrants in Trinidad, the number of unindentured and indentured immigrants were noted in the counties of St. George, Caroni, Victoria and St. Patrick. In all of the sugar and to a lesser degree cocoa estates found in these counties, the number of unindentured outweighed the indentured immigrants. These reports do not take into account Indians not working on the estates.

[54] A.P. Marryat to Secretary State of the Colonies 1896. C.O. 295/382 T.N.A./U.K.

[55] *Ibid.*

[56] *Annual Report of Immigrants for Trinidad 1901-1902*. IOR L/PJ/6/606 File 1494. Note that the Immigration Ordinance in Trinidad went through many changes. For some years, the section that deprives estates of their labour was noted as 67 or 70. For all the estates that closed down due to this section in 1910 see BPP, XXVII, 1910 (*Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies.* Part 3, *Note. W.H. Coombs Protector of Immigrants*), p. 123.

shown to his satisfaction for the larger proportion of its labourers earning small wages."[57] This piece of legislation ensured that the terms of the contract in which a potential Indian emigrant entered into were fixed.

Section 66 was a timely piece of legislation that sought to stabilize and control the amount of labour. It also revealed how colonial administrators who were on the ground had sought to respond to the plights of Indians on the estates. In the same private letter to Lord Stanmore, Charles W. Mitchell recalled a conversation with the Trinidad governor prior to the enactment of Section 66. At that time the governor, merely regarded the contract as an agreement between the planter and the labourer. Mitchell retorted by saying he could not accept the limited relationship the agreement entailed, as the contract also involved the agents in India who looked after potential emigrants.[58] Mitchell recalled the bounty system in Mauritius where indentured Indians were coerced into re-indenturing themselves through successive contracts, thereby putting themselves at the mercy of the planter to ensure their proper wages. In practice, Section 66 was a fixed piece of legislation that clashed with several mutating variables. These included the haphazard nature of the sugar cane industry owing to the climatic and economic conditions in Trinidad and London, and the rate at which free Indians were buying and developing Crown lands and becoming their own employers.

In a similar vein, Henry A. Alcazar, who was the official member on the Legislative council for San Fernando and later mayor of Port of Spain, firmly agreed with section 66 and denounced the quota of nearly 3,000 fresh new Indian immigrants to be imported for the 1896 season. By visiting estates such as Lothians, Craignish and Bien Intento, Alcazar gathered evidence citing the meagre wages Indians were receiving. He exclaimed that on more than fifty percent of estates in Trinidad Indians were not getting the minimum wage promised to

[57] Minute. Napier Broome to Joseph Chamberlain. 1896. C.O. 295/371. T.N.A/U.K.
[58] Charles Mitchell to Lord Stanmore, 1896. C.O 295/374 T.N.A/U.K.

them.[59] James Grieg admitted that Indians were underfed and starving on some estates. He observed that tasks given to the workers would have them in the field from five o'clock in the morning to seven o'clock at night, yet these workers were called lazy.[60] Alcazar exclaimed that the "Indian government allowed its labourers to be recruited on the solemn promise of our government that these immigrants should earn the minimum wage."[61] He firmly recognized that there was an infinite supply of labour in the colony ready to work on sugar estates, and that the successive wages of new recruits caused a glut on the labour market.

As a result, the planter's constant replenishment of a stable and cheap labour force via indentureship had a negative effect not only on wages but on the purchasing power of unindentured immigrants. The contract signed by the Indian labourer was multivalent: it was a mutual agreement and promise between the Government of India and Trinidad, between the recruiter at Calcutta or Madras and the potential Indian emigrant, as well as between the estate manager and the Indian labourer.

IV. Desertion and Recruitment of labourers

Cases of desertion provide a good lens for examining the Indian response to the plantation system. The ability of the Indians to escape working conditions associated with estate life is equivalent to marronage. Instances of marronage referred to cohorts of African slaves running away with the assistance of other slaves. In the past, marronage amongst African slaves subverted the plantation system; desertion amongst Indian indentured labourers did the same. These activities illustrate how both African and Indians were able to manipulate existing conditions to escape the economic stronghold of the planter class. This in turn made them active agents in Trinidad's labour force.

[59] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1895 speech by H.A. Alcazar. C.O 295/363 T.N.A./U.K.
[60] BPP. 1897, L, (*Report on WIRC* Appendix C Vol. I Part I, James Grieg, Glasgow), p. 64.
[61] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1895 speech by H.A. Alcazar. C.O 295/370 T.N.A./U.K.

The climactic conditions in Trinidad afforded the free or outside labourer considerable leverage to diversify his skills in other industries. In Morton Klass' account of Amity, the fictitious name he gives to his ethnographic study of an Indian village in rural Trinidad, he wrote that in Trinidad, "sugar is the basis of existence. Their lives are regulated by the crop. It determines when they will rise in the morning, what part of the year they will be without work and money, when they can get married, when they will eat well, and when they will eat poorly."[62] The fortunes of the late nineteenth century sugar cane planter were at the mercy of seasonal cane production in Trinidad, as well as the indifference of the British authorities towards those who invested in sugar. Cane cultivation in Trinidad is regulated by two three seasons: crop time (January to May), the planting or slack season (June to August) and the wet season (October to December).

Comins noted that unlike British Guiana, Trinidad did not possess a climate where canes could be ripened and manufactured all year round. During crop time, the factory was in full swing and there were less idle hands during the harvesting period. The free labourer or the unindentured Indian was highly paid, as there was an abundance of work to be done. As a result, the free labourer could make more money from work on the estates; consequently, there was less demand for this type of labourer as the cost was offset by the increased demand for indentured workers who can be cheaply paid because their wages were fixed. However, during the slack season and rainy season there is little work for the indentured labourer and the free labourers were engaged in planting and weeding their own gardens.[63]

During the slack season, the wages of indentured immigrants dwindled significantly which was of serious consequence to planters who had a contractual obligation to ensure their new recruits were paid the minimum wage. On one of the largest estates during the 20 weeks of crop, the indentured immigrants earned a total of $7,344, an average of $367 per week,

[62] Morton Klass, *East Indians in Trinidad. A study of Cultural Persistence* (New York, 1961), 66.
[63] Comins, *Indian Emigration to Trinidad*, 11.

while during the remaining 32 weeks the same people only earned $7,742 or an average of $240.[64] Moreover, during the slack season, outside labour was unreliable because not enough was work was available. Instead, free labourers, who were engaged in cane farming, would cultivate their allotted lands by planting small gardens with friends and family. Also, during the out of crop season, outside labourers would take to rice planting in areas such as the Oroupuche Lagoon and Nariva Swamp. The rice industry was considered to be an exclusive Indian enterprise. While the industry was not lucrative, it was a visible sign of how the agricultural practices of Indians played a part in their becoming indigenized to Trinidad. Even in the face of Trinidad's crop cycle, the planters petitioned the administration for more recruits as it fed into their own anxieties about losing this vital supply of labour.

Indentured labourers also managed to take advantage of the opening up of Crown lands when wages were low due to low returns on cane manufacturing. It was easy for a runaway labourer to change his name, and live and work any time undetected with some friends who had a small cocoa plantations.[65] James Grieg stated that in 1884 when wages had to be reduced, indentured labourers would drift away from estates and squat in the backlands or work on government railways.[66] As bonded labourers, wage rates depended on the completion of the tasks given such as filling a quota of cane to be reaped that was to be processed in the factories. However, with falling sugar prices, estate managers increased the size of tasks and lowered the wages to cut down on manufacturing costs.[67]

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[64] Marryat to Secretary of State of the Colonies.1896. C.O. 295/371 T.N.A/U.K.
[65] Napier Broome to Joseph Chamberlain. 1896 C.O. 295/370. T.N.A/U.K.
[66] BPP.1898, L, (*Report on WIRC* Appendix C Vol. 1 Part I .James Grieg), p.64. Large loans were being made to the government railways for the 1896-97period, thus drawing away Indian labour. Note from planters such as Peter Abel, John S. Wilson, Charles Tennant, A.P. Maryatt to Broome C.O. 295/371. T.N.A./U.K.

[67] Kusha Haracksingh. 'Aspects of an Indian Experience in the Caribbean' in John Gaffar LaGuerre and Ann Marie Bissessar (eds.), *Calcutta to Caroni* (Trinidad, 2005), 225. See also Radica Mahase, " 'Plenty of them Run Away' Resistance by Indian indentured Labourers in Trinidad, 1870–1920", *Labor History*, 49 (2008), 465 – 480. In this study, Mahase examines acts of resistance by Indian migrants. She conflates acts of desertion on the estates with forms of cultural resilience. Her evidence includes the Hosay Massacre, strikes and the kinship networks that were formed on ships. While these examples are of intrinsic value, these episodes become

Lower wages meant more desertion. Indentured servants who were caught breaking their contract or suspected of planning to desert their estate of employment were arrested without warrant and were brought before an officer in the Immigration Depot.[68] If an indentured labourer was caught violating his contract, he risked being fined up to £5 or imprisonment. Under the Immigration Ordinance, convicted labourers were placed in separate prison accommodations and made to work.[69] Charles Mitchell notes that in 1884 alone, 16,308[70] days were lost due to breaches of contract related to desertion. Additionally, between 1911 and 1915, over 10, 905 immigrants were charged with breaches of indenture and other offences, of which 2,967 indentured labourers were charged with desertion.[71] In fact, in 1913 of 10,982 indentured Indians 2,996 were charged with offences. [72]

Attitudes towards the acts of desertion reveal a stark contrast as to how the planters and administration officials dealt with labour offences. In observing the management activities of certain estates, Stanmore writes: "It is curious to note how the rate of desertion follows suit. I strongly demur to the additional restrictions on the liberty and locomotion of immigrants. Why must they remain prisoner on the estate when work is over?"[73] These acts committed by Indian labourers to a certain extent were considered signs of resistance, and

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homogenized into an overall narrative of resistance. Rather, these actions of Indian labourers both- free and indentured- must be historicized. These occurrences must be seen in their specific contexts that in turn will elucidate complex themes on agency in labour reform within the hierarchy of plantation society. From these incidents, one can see the complexity of how Indians were becoming indigenized in Trinidadian society. See Jon Wilson 'Agency, Narrative, Resistance' in Sarah Stockwell (ed.), *The British Empire: Themes and Perspectives* (Massachusetts, 2008), 254-269.

[68] Note from Secretary of State for India. *Notes on Action Taken on the Report of the Colonial Emigration Committee*. June 1911.Part A. Proceeding 10-16. File 129. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[69] *Recommendations made by Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal in regard to Indian immigrants from Trinidad* Dept. C&I. Emigration Branch. 1913 Part B Proceedings 20-21. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[70]BPP. 1885, LII, (*Report of the Coolie Disturbances in Trinidad. 1884-1885*, Memorandum of Charles Mitchell ,Protector of Immigrants), p.55.

[72] *Annual Report Immigrants in Trinidad 1914*. 1915 Dept. C&I-Emigration Branch. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[73] Stanmore to Mitchell, 1896 C.O. 295/374.T.N.A./U.K Also the Immigration Ordinance 1897. Trinidad Acts 1896-1897 C.O 297/15 T.N.A/U.K. This clause stipulated that if a worker had earned a certain wage he was entitled to leave the estate provided he had the consent of his employer and showed a pass.

thus conditioned the relationship of these two bodies who invested much time in overseeing the management of indentureship. As Doug Haynes and Gyan Prakash noted: "resistance, we would argue should be defined as those behaviours and cultural practices by subordinate groups that contest hegemonic social formations."[74] Furthermore, "consciousness need not be essential to its constitution. Seeming innocuous behaviours can have unintended yet profound consequences for the objectives of the dominant or the shape of a social order. Power and struggle appear here not as polar opposites but as phenomena which co-exist and shape each other."[75] To the planters, desertion threatened their endeavour to maximize on labour output, while, to the administration, desertion played a role in developing industries. Most of these acts of desertion related to agricultural practices amongst both free and indentured Indians that remained outside the purview of the planter. [76] These sets of activities were predicated on the advantage of certain conditions peculiar to Trinidad's landscape as well the kinship networks that were formed by Indians, both of which were beneficial to the overall development of Trinidad's industries.

Peter Abel, who was manager of the Usine St. Madeleine sugar factory, firmly believed that the sale of Crown lands to indentured Indians had to be stopped. He knew that in the Naparima District alone, nearly 500 acres had been bought by Indians. To him, the unrestricted sale of Crown lands provided a gateway for desertion as groups of coolies either indentured or free, would get three or four of their friends together to abscond, in order to work on their lands. He cited a case where a group of 23 indentured Indians would collectively pool their resources to purchase land. One man would purchase directly from the Crown, while the others would add to those acres by collecting on the ten acres as promised

[74] Douglas Haynes and Gyan Prakash, *Contesting Power. Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asia* (Delhi, 1991), 4.

[75] *Ibid.* 5

[76] Shahid Amin, 'Small Peasant Commodity Production in Eastern U.P'. in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies Volume 1 Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi, 1982), 231-291.

by the government. Free Indians would get their friends who were still under indenture to work for them.[77]

At the time, Trinidad had thousands of acres of uncultivated land. Deserters would flee to the thickly wooded areas that were under cultivation. Abel attested that the chief employers of indentured labourers were their own countrymen who owned land scattered all over the country. In fact, he was able to secure a conviction against an indentured immigrant who was harboring several other labourers. Abel bemoaned the fact that the procedural machinery under the Masters and Servants Ordinance that empowered deserters to be brought before legal authorities was a dead letter. Proof of desertion was extremely difficult as Indians would take shelter in areas in which Indian landowners would harbour their fellow countrymen from local authorities. Moreover, a great deal of time was taken up by managers, overseers and headmen to locate these individuals. Even to put forth a motion to recover deserters would require a manager or overseer to pay a visit to the police authorities. The situation would then be exacerbated when an Indian brought before a magistrate to be charged with desertion, was merely reprimanded. Abel then cited that in the years 1892-95, over 1,996 indentured immigrants deserted which amounted to almost 40 percent of time lost in a 280 contract day cycle. Therefore to him, desertion was very easy and the recovery of a deserter almost impossible. To the planter, getting a conviction for desertion was impossible thus making the remedy for breaches of contract elusive.[78]

Planters on the West India Committee also complained that the system of giving free passes and certificates was unregulated and a leading cause in desertion.[79] Section 149 of the Immigration Ordinance stated that if an indentured Indian was earning at least 3 to 6*s* and

[77] BPP. L, 1897 (*Report on the WIRC*, Appendix C, Vol. 2, Part IV, Peter Abel), p.290.

[78] BPP. 1898 L, (*Report on the WIRC*, Appendix C. Vol. II, Part IV, Peter Abel), p.292

[79] West India Committee Circular. 1896 C.O. 295/367 T.N.A./U.K..

other immigrants were earning at least 4s a week, he would be entitled to leave the estate and be furnished with a free pass with the permission of his employer. When an indentured immigrant finished his contract, he received a certificate of completion. Planters testified that certificates of completion and passes that were used to validate the term of completion, or by a labourer's death, and, or departure from the colony were being passed around, thus enabling a labourer to leave the estate. Planters blamed the laxity of the Immigration Department; however, Stanmore, who by virtue of his experience of indenture, was deeply concerned by the means by which the law constricted the movements of labourers.

The employment of an indentured labourer was an offence under Section 143 of the 1897 Immigration Ordinance. Charles Mitchell protested against this legislation when he replied:

> In the face of such stringent provisions of the law, the most constitutional and peaceable course to pursue would be for the immigrant population here to petition this great Mother the Queen for the removal of restrictions on the ordinary liberty of the subject from which the Creole population and other British subjects here are exempt and which interfere with the Indian population in free disposal of its labour and in other ways too numerous to numerate. Such a petition should as a matter of course be forwarded through the Governor and though perhaps the Secretary of State might not recommend the Queen to grant the prayer nor should the Creole population of this Colony remain indifferent to restrictions placed on our Indian immigrant population for every legal restriction imposed on this class in the disposal of its labour and on its liberty must re-act indirectly on the Creole labouring population here.[80]

Mitchell was troubled as to how this legislation placed under scrutiny a particular section of the colony that now formed one-third of its population. Mitchell, like Stanmore and to a certain extent Alcazar, exposed the limited vision of planters had in their management of the colony's labour supply. The language of liberty being employed here was indicative of the practical experience with indentureship these individuals had. Mitchell's statements were a warning to the planter class who continued to restrict the mobility of Indian labourers. Perhaps his statements were also marked by anxieties because as Protector, he witnessed

[80] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1897, Charles Mitchell former Protector of Immigrants. C.O. 295/328. T.N.A./U.K.

serious strikes that took place on estates such as Waterloo, Golconda, Corinth and Bien Intento.[81] On Waterloo Estate, task time was increased from 16 to 17 hours; however, when the manager attempted to reduce the wages for the mill gang from 40 cents to 30 cents, workers struck out.[82] Strikes were most rampant during the slack season where outside labour being employed on the estate drove down the wages for those who were indentured, thereby causing a breach in the contract between the indentured labourer and the employer. A shift in practice was taking place in that it was prudent for the Indian to be gradually absorbed into the mainstream of Trinidad's labouring masses that included Afro-Trinidadians.

Beneath the complaints of desertion rested the continuing frustration and anxiety amongst the planters that they were losing labour supply. Desertion played a larger role in integrating the Indians into Trinidad's labouring masses. To the planter, it meant a loss of fixed labour supply, while to the colonial administration, it fed into the development of Trinidad's industries. Norman Lamont of Glasgow retorted to this as follows: "Wel, the population is insufficient without the coolies to begin with; and, in the second place, negroes are very irregular workers. If a negro can live for a week on the wages he gets for two day's work, he would only work for those two days a week, whereas the coolie will work for his full five or six days a week in order to save the money that he does not spend; they are thrifty."[83] Although African workers did contribute to Trinidad's working force, the planters' inability to control a wage rate allowed them to imagine and market Trinidad's landscape as a vast wilderness that needed to be tamed. The ideology of the planters' world was manifested when A.P Maryatt wrote: "Many of the larger proprietors have informed me that it is only the presence of the immigrant that keeps the creole in his place; where there are no Immigrants

[81] BPP. L, 1898,(*Report on WIRC,* Appendix C, Vol. II, Part IV, Charles Mitchell) p.264.
[82] Charles Mitchell to Lord Stanmore, 1896. C.O. 295/374. T.N.A./U.K Even though Mitchell was the Protector of Immigrants during the Hosay massacre, the Government of India when notified that the strike was not over wages felt that *no* further investigation needed to be done. Government of India to Secretary State for India. India Office Record (I.O.R.) L/P&J/6/159 File 1337. British Library, (B.L.)
[83] BPP. 1898, L, (*Report on WIRC,* Appendix, C Volume. I Part I, Norman Lamont), p.70.

the creole is master of the situation and demands higher wages and does little or no work."[84]

The incapacity to control wage rates revealed the racial ideology that was used to describe the Afro-Trinidadians. In response to section 66, Marryat replied: "the creole with a smattering of education calls himself a 'proprietor' and is too proud to work for any wage rate."[85] Signs of improvement justified the notion that the African worker was predisposed to shun estate labour that entailed long hours of work, as he demanded a higher wage. A spokesperson from the Trinidad Estates Company openly declared that as "civilization increases so will the wants of the Negro, and that he could not be depended on."[86] It seemed that improvement was a double-edged sword; the mobility of Africans re-affirmed the older stereotype of the African worker being lazy and adverse to any work which he was inadequately paid for. The wage rate fuelled a conception that Indians were better workers than Africans and contributed more to Trinidad's workforce.

On the surface, fixed wages and the supply of cheap Indian labour edged Afro-Trinidadians out of the workforce. This would spark the racialized tension between Indians and Afro-Trinidadians in the political developments of the twentieth century. However, estate authorities did employ free Indian labour and African labour in which these workers were given tasks such as weeding, forking, and building dams as they had more experience than fresh recruits from India. For example on cocoa plantations, free Indian labour garnered 35-40 cents whereas the indentured labourer received 25 cents. Once Indians terminated their time of indenture or became the owner of Crown lands, they began to inhabit the same spaces as Afro-Trinidadians. They were subject to the same fluctuating market conditions that brought down wages when planters demanded more indentured workers. Between the planter and the colonial administration, the transition from an indentured labourer to a free labourer granted the Indian the capacity to earn a better wage and livelihood. This, in turn, was aided

[84]A.P. Marryat to Joseph Chamberlain, Secretary State of Colonies 1896. C.O. 295/371. T.N.A./U.K.
[85] *Ibid.*
[86] Trinidad Estates Company to Under Secretary of State of the Colonies. 1902. C.O. 295/413. T.N.A./U.K

by the opening up of Crown lands. Both parties understood the value of the Indian immigrant to the development of industries in Trinidad. To the planter, this transition needed to be restricted while officialdom recognized the need for mobility.

V. The system of recruitment

Recruiting potential Indian emigrants for Trinidad was a crucial tactic on the part of the planters to control their labour supply. Given the many opportunities for desertion in Trinidad and the informal networks both unfree and free labourers used to get their kin to work for them, recruiting practices for the adequate Indian immigrant concentrated on physical capability and caste. G.T Fenwick testified that:

> There are certain indentured immigrants who come here that are high caste in their own country, [and] therefore exercise a great deal of influence here; and if these men want any work done by other men, they can always exercise an amount of control upon them which the estate authorities find it very difficult to overcome and in many instances where the higher caste men by reason of the position they hold amongst their countrymen, as what we call drivers or over lookers, when those men acquire lands they have a general influence and work for them for very much smaller wages than they do upon estates.[87]

Financially, planters had to absorb two-thirds of the cost of immigrants that included indentured fees, as well as hospital costs if labourers were sick or injured while at work on the estates. Potential emigrants were subjected to a strict medical examination that was carried out by the civil surgeon at the Depot in Calcutta or Madras. Stipulation for emigrants coming from the Mafasal stated that men should not be more than thirty-five years old, and women not more than thirty, unless they formed part of a family. The chest had to be round and well developed: flat- chested men should be rejected. The hands should be hard showing that the emigrant was accustomed to manual labour. A short stature or slimness was not an objection if the emigrant was wiry and tough and adept at handling agricultural implements. The weight of males had to be nearly proportionate to their height; that is, 8 stone 3 lbs. for

[87] BPP.1898, L, (*Report on WIRC,* Appendix C, Part II, Vol. IV, G. T .Fenwick), p.295-96

5 ft. and 5 lbs. additional each inch over 5 ft. These physical requirements were a direct response to the planters who complained that batches of recruits from India were sickly, anemic or were ill suited to agricultural labour.[88]

Potential emigrants had to demonstrate that they were suitable for an agricultural life in the colonies.[89] For example, in August 1912, an emigrant named Mita, and his father Janki embarked for Trinidad on the S.S. *Mutlah*. He was a Kahar by caste and was described as having a wrist that was very strong to easily grasp a Kudali (native name for hoe).[90] As well, there was an assumption that agricultural labourers who occupied the lower castes lacked education and intelligence which made it easier for planters to exert their influence over them. For example, Indians from the Odda caste were selected, as this caste was affiliated with agriculture.[91]

Recruiting by Calcutta agents was limited to Bengal, the Punjab, Chota Nagpur, the Central Provinces, the Northwest Provinces and the Oudh. Recruiting from Chota Nogpur was very difficult due to Assam tea plantation owners paying nearly 100 rupees a head which was three times higher than recruiting from the colonies. In Orissa, most of the inhabitants were chiefly agriculturalists; yet, according to recruiter they were strict "Hindoos" and it was hard to induce them to cross the seas. The labourers in the Northwest Provinces and the Oudh proved to be more useful as they were a "more robust and manly race".[92] However it was also

[88] W.H. Coombs to Colonial Secretary. 1896. C.O 295/374.T.N.A/U.K. This file contains a list of emigrants who were rejected from becoming agricultural labourers. Most descriptions point to lack of physical capability.
[89] Basdeo Mangru, *Benevolent Neutrality Indian Government Policy and Labour Migration to British Guiana, 1854-88* (London, 1987).

[90] *Indian Emigrants in Trinidad (Confidential).* Dept.C&I-Emigration Branch to India Office. August 14th, 1914. Part A Proceedings 16 G.O.I N.A.I and I.O.R. L/PJ/6/ 538 File 1256. B,L.
[91] Letters from India. Colonial Government Agency Madras. 1916. National Archives Trinidad and Tobago (N.A.T.T.)
[92] O.W. Warner Government Emigration Agent for Trinidad, Madras to Colonial Secretary, Trinidad, 1896 C.O. 295/367 T.N.A./U.K.

argued that should the inhabitants of that region have two or three good crops, getting immigrants for Trinidad would prove to be difficult.[93]

Trinidad planters protested that Indians who were allocated to plantations were jewellers, priests, barbers and basket makers thus rendering them ineffective for plantation work.[94] Hence a list of instructions was produced to remedy this problem of unsuitable Indian workers migrating to Trinidad. Stipulations for recruiting in the Mafasal read: "Temple Brahmans, Kaaths, Bainahs, Shopkeepers, Weavers, Dyers, Panjabis, Priests, beggars, jogis, fakirs should be rejected. Moreover, men bearing on their bodies the marks of branding from the various places of pilgrimages should be specially examined and be unhesitatingly rejected if of high caste[95]. If there was any doubt of a labourer not being bona fide he or she should be rejected.

Predictably, the planters were in a constant struggle with agents in India over the selection process for the "proper type of recruit". Stipulations made recruitment difficult and opened the doors for recruiters to trick would-be emigrants into migrating to the colonies. Agents at the Calcutta Depot argued that:

> We are confined to drawing recruits from people who are exposed to famine, drought and flood whose supplies of the necessaries of life are constantly attended with uncertainty and who at times are forced to undergo semi starvation. These are the causes which make coolies wish to leave their homes and become willing to go abroad. More robust people who are contented and happy prefer to remain at home. Of those who are recruited large numbers require to be placed on extra and especially nourishing diet on admission to the Calcutta Depot in order to eradicate the effect of the privations they have undergone.[96]

Agents who worked at the depots reported that many arrivals were weedy and weak men; some were deaf or semi-idiots or too old to engage in hard labour. If newly arrived emigrants were found to be physically or medically unfit, charges would be made to the Immigration

[93] W.H.Coombs, Protector of Emigrants, Calcutta to Napier Broome. 1896. CO 295/371. T.N.A./U.K
[94] A.P. Maryatt to Napier Broome, 1896 C.O. 295/ 382. T.N.A./U.K.
[95] Rules to be observed for the selection of Emigrants by Trinidad Agency. 11 Garden Reach, Calcutta. C.O. 295/367.T.N.A./U.K.
[96] *Ibid.*

Fund for their upkeep. If they were deemed to be quarrelsome, they were regarded as burdens to the estate and therefore brought discredit to the system of indenture.[97]

Certain areas were avoided for recruitment because the inhabitants were not suited for agricultural work. For example, it was forbidden for Punjabis, Sikhs and Nepalis to be recruited because they were known to work as policemen and soldiers. As well, returned emigrants were to be rejected from Trinidad, British Guiana and Fiji because they created disturbances on estates.[98] However, the increasing demand for labour allowed for malpractices in recruitment.[99] For example, in 1904, correspondence from the Inspector General of Police in Trinidad reached the Colonial Office suggesting that there were a number of "undesirable emigrants." Over the course of two seasons, a total of 507 men who were Sikh, Rajputs Jats, and Pathan castes arrived in Trinidad where some of them had served in the Native Regiments of India. The inspector wrote:

> I need hardly emphasize the fact that importation of men of this stamp as indentured immigrants is highly undesirable and if continued may even prove a source of danger to the community; for these men, it must be remembered, not only belong to war like peoples but in many instances regard themselves as being victims of a malicious deception and so labour under a deep sense of injury. Already there have been several instances of Punjabi immigrants organizing desertion of a somewhat grand scale.[100]

Sham Singh, who was previously employed in the Sikh Battery of Artillery and living in St. James barracks, stated that he and others were induced to come to Trinidad on the false pretence that they would not have to labour.[101] These particular Indians were from the North-Western tribes of India and were accustomed to agriculture; however, people of these castes were considered to be warrior-like since many had entered into military life. There was the perception that their military careers predisposed them to engage in inciting riots on plantations. In fact, in 1904, Punjabi immigrants who worked in the forking gang on

[97] *Recommendations made by Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal in regard to Indian immigrants from Trinidad* . 1913 Dept. C&I Emigration Branch. Part B Proceedings 20-21. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid.*
[100] Inspector General to Acting Governor of Trinidad. Undesirable Emigrants. 1904. C.O. 295/427.T.N.A./U.K.
[101] Minute by the Inspector General Police, 3 June, 1904. *Ibid*

Perseverance estate managed to mobilize workers from other estates to strike. On one occasion, the overseer, Mr McKenzie, was beaten to death by several workers who had protested against low wages. Hence a precedent was set to avoid recruiting from the Punjab.[102] However, recruiters were under pressure from the colonial authorities to supply their industries with adequate labourers, and to "reject robust returned immigrants and fill up the ship's complement with barbers and washermen was looking for trouble."[103] The colonial authorities were afraid that people occupying high castes would educate the lower caste agricultural labourers to rebel against the indentureship scheme. For the British in India, the caste system in India was seen as a rigid form social and economic organization in which there was a fusion of not only religious duties but also that of occupation. Agents for the emigration system in India, who were under the pressure of planters, deployed their knowledge of caste to ensure that a stable supply of immigrants was being brought over. Not only were there physical standards to be met, but also the intelligence of the Indian was questioned to prevent any type of unruly behaviour. However, at the same time, these regulations were being eroded by an administration that provided a gateway for Indians to move off the plantations to become proprietors.

Emigrants from other islands in the British West Indies were also to be avoided. In the Annual Reports of Immigration to Trinidad which were used to report the conditions of both free and indentured workers, there was heading labelled "Deckers". Between 1901 and 1902, ships named *Elbe*, *Erne*, and *Clyde* brought a total of 2,475 recruits from India. On these, nearly 19,493 deckers were on board. "Deckers" referred to the contingent of people from Barbados, St. Vincent and Grenada who brought produce such as pigs, poultry and vegetables to sell in the market.[104] Since recruitment from India strained the finances of the colony,

[102] Minute Protector of Immigrants. 1907 C.O. 295/441. T.N.A/U.K.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Annual Report of Immigrants for Trinidad. 1900-1901* Council Paper No. 63, 1902. I.O.R. L/P&J/6/606 File 1491.

migration from other islands was seen as a viable solution for needed labour. However, this type of immigration was seen as unsteady as many people from Barbados would find friends and relatives to work in their kitchen gardens and not stay fixed on plantations. Their unreliability branded them as insubordinates, as troublesome and completely inadaptable to the work required on sugar plantations.[105] Like the stipulations that ensured Indians were adequate for agricultural work, immigrants from Barbados were accused of being unaccustomed to work on a plantation as many of them were blacksmiths or carpenters which diminished the efficiency of the workforce on estates.

The more experience Indians and Afro-West Indians gained in working on sugar plantations in various capacities, the more they acquired a variety of skill sets which made them unreliable. Their ability to diversify within a number of labouring capacities would take them away from agricultural work and in to areas in which their talents could be used such as the development of the railway or other public works. Hence the suitability of immigrants from India further increased the anxieties of planters losing their labour supply. The insatiable appetite for secure labour however, strained the internal resource management capabilities of the administration to deal with a market that had too many workers. As a result, the ills of the indenture scheme fuelled the agendas of Trinidad's working masses as well as nationalists in India who were seeking reform.

VI. Trinidad Workingman's Association (T.W.A.)

Planters bore two-thirds of the costs of importing Indian labourers. Expenses included hospital fees, food, clothing and return passages. However, the remainder of the costs came from taxes placed on the production of sugar cocoa, molasses, rum, copra, and coconuts in the entire colony. The tax rate fluctuated every year and was determined by how much labour was needed on the estates. It was here that the Trinidad Workingmen's Association (T.W.A.)

[105] "Agricultural Society Paper on the Merits of Barbadian Immigration", 1897. C.O. 295/379. T.N.A./U.K.

came to the fore to protest against the planters' wishes for successive waves of Indian recruits as payment for these migrants was to be received from taxed produce of the land. This group was made up of Trinidad's working masses, and there was a significant Afro-Trinidadian presence.

At the 1897 Royal Commission, Peter Abel was asked: "And you think it would be unfair to call upon the estates to pay a certain sum yearly to a fund to meet the expenses of sending them to India?" He replied: "I think the country ought to pay for them, seeing that they have the benefit of them as citizens. Practically we have paid for the labourer and lost him."[106]Abel's use of the word "citizen" is noteworthy because, to him, the Indian labourer did belong to the colony by virtue of his labour. However, this process of indigenizing the Indian came at the cost of displacing the Afro-Trinidadian which would sow the seeds of divisiveness between the races.

Established in 1896, the TWA was an ad hoc trade union that was considered to be the political organ of the working man. It was modelled after the English Workingman's Association that was formed after the Industrial Revolution, whose main aim was to improve the conditions of the English working masses.[107] Members of the TWA included carpenters, masons, labourers, tailors and other tradesmen. It had no fixed place for meetings; rather, friends of the Association let their rooms and occasionally member met at the Lodge called the Souls in Purgatory. By 1910, its members included clerks, government railway employees and planters. Members included J.S. DeBourg "a black man" and an ex-school teacher who became president of the T.W.A. as well as other leaders such as Alfred Richards who was a chemist, and John Phillips, a contractor.[108] The main aim of the T.W.A was to gain more representation and become an active participant in the process of wealth distribution in the

[106] BPP. 1897, L, (*Report on the WIRC,* Appendix C, Vol. II, Part IV, Peter Abel), p. 292
[107] Brinsley Samaroo, 'The Trinidad Workingman's Association and the Origins of Popular Unrest in a Crown Colony', *Social and Economic Studies* , 21 (1972), 205-221.
[108] Knollys to Colonial Office, 1906 and Governor George LeHunte to Colonial Office, 1910. C.O. 295/375 and C.O. 295/451. T.N.A./U.K.

colony.[109] The racial identity of the T.W.A. at its inception was multiracial and operated along class lines. The enfranchising of the working masses fed into the larger struggle for this body to seek reform of the Legislative Council on a representative principle.[110] This idea would play a larger role during constitutional reform. The T.W.A. was to become a forum for workers in Trinidad to seek government reform. Walter Mills, a pharmacist, acted as a representative for the TWA on the West Indian Royal Commission of 1897. He drew attention to poverty in Trinidad; the sanitation of dwellings of labourers were so neglected that disease was rampant, thus straining the finances of hospitals and increasing the number of prisoners as crime inevitably arose. He advocated for the opening up of Crown lands, and argued for more money to be spent on public roads so that metal from the quarries could be used to extend the railways.[111]

The T.W.A. protested against the planters' order for a further 3,200 immigrants to be recruited from India. T.W.A. members petitioned for duties on sugar and rum (that were used to pay for more Indian recruits) to be abolished. They argued that Indian migrants hindered the development of the colony, drove up the price of labour and were synonymous with unemployment. Between 1890 and 1910, there was a disproportionate amount of land to that of the number of available workers in the colony. T.W.A members pointed out an apparent contradiction that although there was an abundance of land to be cultivated, finding employment on estates was impossible. Instead, the planters preferred to use cheap labour from India and even refused to use labour-saving devices. To the planter, manual labour meant that workers use the hoe, cutlass, spade and fork to harvest cane. One member said: "This is an evolution in inverse direction to what has taken place, during the same period in every other civilized country".[112] This group and their reservations about Indian migration

[109] Knollys to Chamberlain. 1896 C.O. 295/375. T.N.A./U.K.
[110] Petition of TWA to Colonial Office. 1906 C.O. 295/437, 1906.T.N.A./U.K.
[111] BPP.1898, L (*Report on WIRC*, Appendix C, Vol. II, Part IV, Walter Mills), p. 265.
[112] Petition of T.W.A. 1911 C.O. 295/465. T.N.A./U.K..

played a significant role in the endeavour to stop indentureship. More so, they would pave the way for Trinidad's working classes to present a united front when agitating for constitutional reform after World War One.

VII. Agitation in India and the response

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the indentured scheme was criticized by Indian nationals and groups such as the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society operating in London. Stories of abuse suffered by Indians in colonies like Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, and Fiji captured the attention of these groups who thought it their moral duty to protect the interests of those who had emigrated from India. Government of India district magistrates who were stationed in areas that yielded the most recruits, agents who worked at emigration ports, and even colonial governors in the various colonies all reported on the conditions of Indian emigrants. The agitation in India over indentured labour revolved around ideas that the "Indian labour sacrifices his liberty"[113] by going to a distant country by binding himself down to work under rigid conditions for a master who regards him as mere chattel.[114] The Indian was treated in the colonies as an outcast, a dangerous semi-barbarian who was not entitled to the treatment of the law accorded to free men.[115] These officials scrutinized a system of recruitment of Indian emigrants that entailed kidnapping, a high rate of prosecution and suicides on the estates, and the disproportionate ratio between men and women in the colonies. These elements were viewed as blots on the system of emigration because they degraded the moral status of Indians abroad.

If enough agricultural labourers were not obtained, the recruiters would often lurk about in the bazaars in big towns and pick up anyone they could get hold of. Recruiters had a

[113] Mr P.C. Lyon and Mr. Beatson Bell. Dept. C&I Emigration. 1915. G.O.I to Austen Chamberlain. 1916 C.O. 323/717. T.N.A/U.K.

[114] *Ibid.*

[115] .*Ibid.*

notorious reputation for being part of the lower classes and often resorted to bribing the police to fill their quota of recruits.[116] In districts along the Gangetic Plain, recruiting officers were paid Rs. 35 for males, Rs. 45 for women and Rs. 17-18 for children. A special bonus of Rs. 10 was given to every additional female emigrant that would exceed the quota needed for a particular colony.[117] Also, recruiters were cautioned against using returned men to act as workers for the immigration system. Although returned men were acquainted with the tasks, agents were wary because these men occasionally suffered from "excess of cleverness that may put the recruits up to petty tricks on board."[118] As stated earlier, the survival of plantations in the colonies demanded that Indian immigrants be physically fit and have some agricultural knowledge. Casual labourers taken from large and industrial cities were undesirable because they caused trouble in the colonies, were often prosecuted and returned to India.

Emigration to the colonies ruptured the Indian family as caste was corrupted both by the physical journey of leaving the Indian homeland and the need for labour. Indians abroad were rendered as second-class citizens. This characteristic stood in the way of India becoming an equal partner with the British Empire. To combat this reality, the campaign to end indentureship mobilised Indian civil society in which grassroots organizations were created by Indians from various religious, class and political backgrounds, with the sole purpose to end this imperial scheme. Media employed by various groups included pamphlets, serials, newspapers and lectures which were used to disseminate information regarding indenture. Through these outlets, voices of indentured labourers surfaced, which, in turn, served as lynchpins for the Indian public to debate India's role in the Empire. Petitions for the

[116] Note from Secretary of State for India. *Notes on Action Taken on the Report of the Colonial Emigration Committee.* June 1911. Dept. C&I-Emigration Branch Part A. Proceeding 10-16. File 129. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[117] *Ibid.*

[118] *Recommendations made by Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal in regard to Indian immigrants from Trinidad*. 1913. Dept. C&I.(Emigration Branch) Part B Proceedings 20-21. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

dismantling of the system of indentureship were grounded in the method of recruitment that was seen as stigma to the Indian race. One organization, named the Anti-Indentureship Coolie Protection Society, was part of an underground movement to secure the end of indentureship. Members used pamphlets in Patna around Muzzafpur and Dharbanga. An extract read as follows:

> Beware, Beware, Beware
> Escape from Deceivers, Escape from the Depot people
> Do not fall into their snare. They will ruin you. You will weep your life along
> Instead of rupees rubbish will fall on you. They are taking you across the sea. To Mauritius, To Demerara, to Fiji, Jamaica, to Trinidad and Honduras. They are not islands they are hell. Do not go by mistake. By exciting your greed for money they will destroy your caste. There you will break stones. On board people only get one seer of water in twenty-four hours. At stations and pilgrimages, in Dharmsalas, in the bazaar they will ask you if you want employment. Fall not into their snare. Do not listen to their words. These men are to be found everywhere. Proclaim this loudly in villages. Every literate brother is prayed to read this to his illiterate brothers and sisters. It will be meritorious divine yajna.[119]

The author of the above pamphlet, Purshuttom Das printed 20,000 of them and had translations made into Hindi which were then distributed to passengers travelling by train to Monghyr District. Railway stations were key locations for distribution because recruiters used public transport to escort recruits to the depots in Calcutta.[120]

The Marwari Association of Calcutta and its main leader Marwari Sahak Samity of 61 Suta Pai Cotton Street, Calcutta, were made up of dedicated individuals, mostly from the banking and merchant classes, who sought to put an end to emigration. Anne Hardgrove argues that Marwaris engaged in "village oriented political activities."[121] The Marwaris saw themselves as representing the thousands of "ignorant and inarticulate masses" who had migrated and settled in far- off lands, but who could not look to the Government of India for help. The question of indentured emigration impacted the social, political and economic

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[119] *Papers on Agitation in India*. Pamphlet Purushottam Das. 1915. C.O 323/717. T.N.A./U.K, also I.O.R. L/PJ/6/1425 File 5279. B.L. and *Memorial of Marwari Association* Dept. C&I, Emigration Branch. 1916 Part B, Proceedings 30-33 G.O.I/ N.A.I. Recruiters who worked in the emigration depots were called *arkatias*

[120] E. L. L. Hammond I.C.S. Secretary to governments of Bihar and Orissa, Municipal Department to Government of India Dept. C&I Department. Emigration Branch. I.O.R. L/PJ/6/1425 File 5279.B.L.

[121] Anne Hardgrove,. 'Community and Public Culture. The Marwaris of Calcutta' (Columbia, Project Gutenberg. http://www.gutenberg-e.org/haa01/index.html.) accessed. 14, March 2010.

development of India and her position as a member of the British Empire. For example, the *Indian Emigrant* was a long running serial (1910-1915), published by T.K. Swaminathan of the Marwari Association. Articles published in this magazine took a transnational view by putting forth information on the experiences of Indians in the Empire, and especially those who had returned from the colonies. The aim of the serial was to discourage the emigration of educated men and skilled labourers, with the hope that the entire indentured scheme would be dismantled. The popularity of this and other serials served as an outlet for Indians to think about their status as citizens in the Empire who deserved equal rights.[122] In the *Indian Emigrant,* the Indian scholar Kavalam Madhava (K.M.) Panikkar wrote an essay entitled "Problems of a Greater India",[123] in which he persuasively argued that the status of Indians abroad sullied the Indian character, which proved to be an impediment to Indians seeking to enjoy the right to be citizens of the Empire. Interestingly, Panikkar acknowledged a Mr Dutt of Trinidad who supplied him with valuable first- hand information on the plight of Indians in Trinidad and the British West Indies. This demonstrates that there was a reciprocal albeit clandestine exchange of information taking place between Trinidad and India with the sole intention of educating audiences on the indentured scheme.[124]

Those committed to ending indentureship agreed that emigration meant that socially disgraced men and women were prevented from returning to their homeland, and "the inevitable consequence was that a race of Indians of a nameless caste were growing up in the colonies, who by their extremely low standard of social and, moral and religious life were doing incalculable harm to India."[125] To illustrate this viewpoint, testimonies were taken of those who were coerced into migrating to the colonies by crossing the seas. By the twentieth

[122] *The Indian Emigrant*. T.K Swaminathan (ed.), (Madras 1914-1916).
[123] K.M. Panikaar, 'Problems of A Greater India',(Madras, 1916). See Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester, 2006).
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] Memorial of Marwari Association.1916 Dept. C&I, Emigration Branch .Part B, Proceedings 30-33 G.O.I./ N.A.I.

century,recruiters were able to receive £7 a head for each new emigrant. In fact, instances of kidnapping apparent in Sahanpur and Basti caused great concern for officials in both the Colonial and India offices. Members of the Marwari Association compiled testimonies of Indians who were almost tricked into going or who had returned from the colonies. They published these testimonies in a serial called the *Daily Bharat Mitra.* This anthology of those who had witnessed the horrific conditions of recruitment and indentureship was presented to the Government of India. In order to authenticate evidence, witnesses were taken to the Magistrate Court in Calcutta. The following story of Rukmini illustrates the tactics used by recruiters to lure women into leaving India for the colonies.

> Rukmini, daughter of Jamudadin Brahmin of the village Moria District. 'I lived in Mathura and used to go every day to bathe in Jamuna. There a woman used to talk to all the female bathers about one Thakur Gyan Singh at whose place she was employed as a cook on Rs. 10 a month. The Thakur, she said was a very good gentleman. I said well, I see you have secured a very good job but as for me, nobody pays me more that Rs. 3 Sometimes she used to bring a man also with her, whose name was Ram Singh and who was a brother of her employer. So we came to know the man. One day this Ram Singh asked me to act for a few days in the place of his Brahman woman, his cook who he said had fallen ill. He offered to pay me nine annas per day if I would do so. I agreed and went to his place with him. There Gyan Singh asked me to accompany him to his father in law's house where he said he was going to bring his wife home. On my asking the name of the village, Gyan Singh said it was Chinitat [126]near Calcutta...it is now three months and half since I came to this depot. I am a Brahmin woman but I had to sit with low caste men for my meals. By getting me released you have saved my religion for which may God bless you. I am a Brahmin woman but the Arkati's put down my caste as an Ahirin or Ahir[127] woman. They also made me take off my ornaments and the clothes I was wearing. They made me put on old clothes to go to the court. When I asked the reason, Gyan Singh told me that such ornaments and clothes would arouse the Magistrate's suspicion that perhaps he was enticing me away someone else's wife and that I could never be a woman of the servant class. I believed this and went with the old clothes on...[128]

[126] Chinnitat- meaning sugar island-the vernacular name for Trinidad. Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery* (Oxford ,1973), 22

[127] Ahir- known as the cow caste- one of the known agricultural castes

[128] *Memorial of the Marwari Association*. Dept. C&I. Emigration Branch .1916. Part B Proceedings 30-33.G.O.I/ N.A.I. As late as 1923 Indians were sending applications to the Government of India to trace their relatives had been kidnapped. One application was from T.D. Imamshah who was searching for his cousin Mohd Shah, a resident of Pandor District, Jhelum. Mohd Shah had been kidnapped by a stranger who promised employment in Lahore; however, this stranger led him to an emigration depot where there were ships bound for Trinidad and other overseas colonies needing indentured labour. Revenue and Agriculture Dept. (Emigration Branch). 1923 Part B Proceeding 33 1923 G.O.I./ NAI. For a series of accounts of Trinidadian Indians who remembered leaving India and being told by recruiters about the wonders of the Caribbean see Noor Kumar Mahabir *The Still Cry ,Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago during Indentureship 1845-1917* (Trinidad, 1985). For an excellent account of the experiences of indentured women see Gautri Bahadur, *Coolie Woman, The Odyssey of Indenture* (London, 2013) and Prabhu Mohupatra "

The case of Rukmini was important because one of the moral blots on indentureship was the disproportionate ratio between men and women. In order to fill the necessary quota of females, young women and even girls were kidnapped in agricultural districts. If women were not accompanied by their husbands, or if unmarried, they were considered to be of bad moral character, or worse, branded as prostitutes who were capable of corrupting men on the estates. Furthermore, Rukmini's case demonstrates the crude attempts by recruiters to get agricultural labourers by demoting Rukimini from a Brahmin to an Ahir. Coupled with taking her ornaments off, colonial power was extended to the body and mind of the Indian character that coercively transformed emigrants both from within and without into units of labour for the colonies.

The Marwaris also sponsored lectures on the dangers on emigration. For example, to highlight kidnappings in the Muttra District, a member of the Marwari Association named K.P. Sarma published articles by Nandan Singh Banis who was a lecturer of the Quli Dukh Nibharni Sabha and a former ex-booking clerk of the Nagda Railway. In his article, Banis described five incidents of kidnapping, most of them involving young females who were tricked by recruiting agents with promises of employment. The District Magistrate of Muttra described the Sabha's activities as being hostile to emigration agents. Moreso, within Agra, a series of lectures given by Tota Ram, Brahmin, of Harangar, Firozabad, warned Indians of going to Fiji because a great deal of hardship awaited those who crossed the sea.[129] Lectures also took place in the market squares of Allahabad and Delhi.

'Restoring the Family' Wife Murders and the making of the sexual contract for Indian immigrant labour in the British Caribbean colonies 1860-1920", *Studies in History*,11(August, 2005), 227-260. Lastly the story Kunti, an indentured woman in Fiji whose sufferings were recounted in the *Daily Bharat Mitra* is the basis of Brij Lal work *Kunti's Cry Indentured Women in Fiji, Indian Economic and Social History Review* 22 (1985), 55-71. This article is an intense study of indentured women in Fiji.

[129] *Alleged cases of kidnapping in the Muttra District.* Extract from *Daily Bharat Mitra*. Dept. C&I -Emigration Branch. Part B Proceedings 8-9 Part B. G.O.I/ N.A.I..

Activists within the Marwari Association would physically detain recruits at the railway stations in Calcutta and claim them as their relatives to release them from their contract. Often this would delay the steamers from departing, and mass confusion at the depot would ensue.[130] A.A. Marsden of the Benares Depot remarked that the Marwaris had engaged in a hostile crusade against colonial recruiting, and whereas sub-agents had been formerly able to supply 100 intending emigrants for British Guiana, and 200 for Trinidad on a weekly basis, the numbers had now shrunk to one half and showed every sign of going lower with complaints coming from the recruiters.[131] Organizations such as the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association also addressed the concerns of Indians abroad. Public lectures and mass gatherings pertaining to indentureship were gaining momentum in India,[132] and both the colonial administrators became anxious that if knowledge of conditions endured by Indians in the colonies became available, more protests would ensue.

Disenchantment with indentureship was not unique to Trinidad and Crown Colonies; campaigns to stop Indian emigration had also started in South Africa and Natal. These attempts were started by Gopal Krishna Gokhale and later Mohandas K. Gandhi, both of whom were members of the Indian National Congress. Indians who had finished serving their indenture contract in both South Africa and Natal experienced racial discrimination. Merchants were restricted from trading and required new trade licences as well as having to produce certificates of identity. Indentureship and the subsequent ill-treatment of Indians in the Dominions and the Crown Colonies, was a crucial issue in India's larger struggle to attain equal status within the Empire. Gokhale was most vocal statesman on the topic of indentured Indians in the Crown colonies. Often in these debates, the West Indian colonies that included British Guiana, Trinidad, and Jamaica were treated separately given the mixture of success

[130] *Ibid.*
[131] *Ibid.*
[132] Note from Secretary of State for India. *Notes on Action Taken on the Report of the Colonial Emigration Committee.* Dept. C&I-Emigration Branch. June 1911. Part A. Proceeding 10-16. File 129. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

and failures of Indian labourers in those colonies. Fiji, on the other hand, garnered a lot of attention because Indians were not allowed to own land. Here, the intervention of C. F. Andrews, Gandhi's close confidant, was vital. Gokhale argued that the unique sets of problems facing Indians under the indenture scheme was part of a wider systemic problem in managing labour that took into account the Afro-West Indian. He stated that if "India and colonies belong to the Empire so do the emancipated negroes."[133] In this statement, Gokhale brought together the legacy of slavery and indentureship in a single moment that bound both Indian and African together in a transnational struggle to rid the system of indentureship.

Although indentureship did not collapse in 1910, the Government of India faced a barrage of criticism from civil organizations in India that sought its immediate abolition. Secretary A.W. Pim, the Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces stated: "It cannot be good that the Colonies should know India as a nation of coolies and it cannot be good that emerging from this sentiment, there is always the risk of India getting embroiled with a colony at a time when mutual understanding and forbearance are yearly becoming more important. The latter danger becomes more real with the extension of self-government and of Federation within the Empire."[134] To the Indian government, indentured servitude was a "racial stigma" [135] and nothing short of slavery, as it rendered the Indian race as a class of serfs. Indentureship was also seen as a "denationalising and emasculating"[136] force that stripped Indians of their freedom, culture and caste and transformed them into beasts of burden devoid of their rich heritage of their motherland. The Indians in the Crown Colonies were branded as criminals and heathens who needed to be controlled. They were exploited by

[133] Proceedings of the Council of Governor General of India assembled for the purpose of making Laws and Regulations under the Provisions of Indian Councils. Indentured Labour. 1911. I.O.R. L/P&J/6/1208 File 4357
[134] Action taken on the report to the Colonies by Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal. Question whether indentureship should continue. Correspondence from various districts. 1915 Dept. C&I Emigration Branch Part A. Proceedings 60-73.G.O.I./ N.A.I.
[135] Dept. C&I to Austen Chamberlain, 1915 C.O 323/717. T.N.A./U.K.
[136] *Gazette of India*. Legislative Council Proceedings. The Honourable Mr.C. Vijiaraghavacharia. 1915. C.O. 323/717 T.N.A./U.K.

planters who robbed them of the earnings from their hard labour and used the money to fill their own coffers. To the Indian Government, indentured servitude was seen as a curse and a "mark of helotry,"[137] ensuring that Indians could not be admitted as British citizens if they be purchased for a small price.

For example, the Honourable Pundit Madan Mohan Malaviya stated:

> The system has worked enough moral havoc during the past 75 years. We cannot think my lord without intense pain and humiliation of the blasted lives of its victims, of the anguish of the soul to which our brothers and sisters have been subjected by this system. It is high time that this should be abolished. Indian indentured labourers too long have been denied their birthright as human beings and it is high time that the yoke of their slavery was removed from their necks.[138]

Newspapers across India ran articles denouncing indentureship as it impeded India's struggle, as well as that of its people to fully attain equal citizenship within the Empire. An excerpt from an article in the *Maharatta* read as follows: "If membership of the British Empire carries with it no privileges for Indians, which any other Asiatic Race does not possess in the Colonies, then the Indians may as well think of resigning this membership."[139] Given the context of desertion in Trinidad, it seems that the tension between the planter and the colonial administration on the mobility of the Indian had migrated across the seas. The welfare of Indians abroad was diffused in the struggle for Indians in the subcontinent who were seeking reform. Commissions such as the Sanderson Committee (Royal Commission of 1910) assessed the conditions of Indians abroad, and were premised on the economic benefits Indian emigrants received and how their livelihoods compared if they remained in India, while underground movements were with the social ramifications indentureship had on the Indian character.

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[137] Extract from *The Times*, 1917, 'Abolition decided upon'. Imperial Institute of India. C.O. 323/717. T.N.A./U.K.

[138] The Honourable Pandit Madhan Mohan Malaviya Legislative Council Proceedings. 1915 C.O. 323/717.T.N.A./U.K

[139] Extract from *Maharatta*. 'Indians in the Colonies'. Comments on India Imperial War Conference 1917 I.O.R. L/PJ/6/3951 File 45. B.L.

On 14 January, 1913, Mr. J McNeil of the Indian civil service and Mr. Lal Chimman Lal and independent East Indian Gentleman, were deputed by the Government of India to visit those colonies employing indentured labour, to enquire into the different systems, and to report upon the state and condition of East Indian immigrants arriving in Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, Fiji and Surinam. Both officers would inquire into the housing of the labourers and the sanitary conditions in which they lived; adequacy of medical arrangements; wages, administration of justice; relations between employers and labourers; birth and death rates and repatriation.[140] Recommendations were also to be made on how to improve the welfare of Indians.

Upon arrival in Trinidad, Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal made their observations on the conditions of Indians in the colony[141] and concluded that although there was a general want of latrines on estates, the housing conditions were generally better than those in India. They suggested that the cost of living might be reduced by abolishing tax on rice and dhal and deserving immigrants should be allowed to keep cows. As well, they recommended that annual reports on immigrants from Trinidad should be standardized in a format which incorporated statistical facts allowing for sickness and be explained rather than a few remarks on the general conditions.[142]

As prosecutions were objectionably high, it was suggested that certain sections of the law be repealed because the estate managers took liberties to punish labourers.[143] Imprisonment for desertion was a disproportionate punishment, and the colonial government

[140] Legislative Council. Government of India. Question and Answer in the Council regarding the deputation of Messrs. McNeill and Chimman Lal to inquire into conditions of Indian labourers in the colonies. February 1914 Dept. C&I-Emigration Branch Part B Proceedings file no.13 Serial 4.G.O.I./ N.A.I.
[141] Trinidad Immigration Report 1912-1913.Dept. C&I Emigration Branch. 1914. Part B Proceedings. 26-29. G.O.I/ N.A.I.
[142] Recommendations made by Chimman Lal and Messrs. McNeill in regard to Indians in Trinidad (Confidential) 1913.Dept. C&I Emigration Part A Proceedings 20-21 G.O.I./ N.A.I.
[143] Imperial Institute of India. 1915.Dept. C&I, (Emgiration Branch) G.O.I to Right Honourable Austen Chamberlain. C.O 323/717. T.N.A./U.K.

needed to provide better avenues for Indian labourers to make representations to estate managers to address grievances. In the end McNeill and Chimman Lal agreed that:

> ....the advantages of emigration under the indentured system have far outweighed its disadvantages. The great majority of the emigrants exchanged grinding poverty with practically no hope for a condition exchanged varying from simple but secure comfort to solid prosperity Emigrants live under much better conditions than their relatives in India, and have had opportunities of prospering beyond their wildest hopes. They became citizens of the colonies to which they emigrated and both they and their descendants have attained to positions commanding general respect and consideration.[144]

However, their line of questioning only took into account the material or economic advantages that indentureship bestowed; evidence from middle class Indians re-confirmed notions that emigration made Indians prosperous citizens of the Empire. Prior to McNeill and Chimman Lal, Abu Ghaznavi of the Legislative Council in India had asked: "Will the government be pleased to state a) the number and the religious denominations of all British Indian subjects who are now in different colonies,(b) How many in each colony and their professions and (c) The number of colonials who are now in British India the different colonies and their profession?."[145]

The response given to Ghazanavi was:

> A statement is put up below showing the approximate number of British Indian Subjects in the various colonies. Precise information concerning the religion is not available for each colony. But it may be said that the vast majority of the emigrants are Hindus, and Mohamedans, the second largest denomination. Their occupations are mainly domestic, commercial, agricultural and industrial. The Commerce and Industry Department has no information concerning question b) beyond what is contained in the Census Report.[146]

The main flaw in McNeill and Chimman Lal's report was that it did not take into account the social impact that indenture had on the Indian character or his or her religion. Damages to caste and dharma were elements that embodied components of an Indian's life that included

[144] S. Fremantle Esq. Magistrate and Collector of Allahabad. To Commissioner of Allahabad Division Feb. 1915 C.O. 323/717. T.N.A./U.K.

[145] Reply in Legislative Council to Hon'be Mr. A.K. Abu Ahmed Ghazanavi asking for statistical information in British Colonies and Colonials in British India. Dept. C&I 1915 .Part B Proceeding 2 File 53. G.O.I/ N.A.I

[146] *Ibid.*

political, economic and social spheres.[147] The clinical approach taken by McNeill and Chimman Lal when collecting information about Indians precluded any inclinations to look after the moral status of emigrants. Resolutions and amendments made by the Sanderson Committee and by McNeill and Chimman Lal were seen from the Indian perspective that only took into account the material benefits of indentureship. Therefore, economic well-being was the sole marker by which Indians abroad were fulfilling the goal of becoming full citizens. Their conclusions proved unsatisfactory to such organizations such as the Marwari Association which made attempts to stop further emigration more intense.

The Indian in the Trinidadian context presents an apparent disconnect between the views of the nationalists who saw indentureship as hindering the merits of Empire versus those Indians who did benefit from indenture and elected to stay in Trinidad.[148] Migration that was coerced and consensual existed in the same time frame amongst Indians who had decided to go to the colonies. However, these decisions were recast or funnelled by various actors who used the idea of indentureship to further their own agendas. For Indian nationalists, indentureship was a new form of slavery in which instances of kidnapping and prosecutions for labour offences took centre stage. Conversely, voluntary migration fitted well with administrators who sought the continuance of migration from India.

Letters from families in India who sought to communicate with their kin in Trinidad reflect these multiple perspectives. For example, in a letter to Inayatullah Khan who migrated to Trinidad, his father writes: "I am really happy to learn that you are doing well there. What I want to impress upon you is the necessity of your coming back home. I do not want you to be in a hurry; carry out the contract loyally and faithfully and then come back home."[149] In

[147] Panikkar, 'Problems of a Greater India' (Madras, 1916), 20.
[148] Prabhu Mohupatra. " 'Longing and Belonging' The Dilemma of Return Among Indian Immigrants in the Caribbean", *IIAS Year Book* (Lieden,1996), 201-237.
[149] Letters from India. Calcutta and Madras Agencies. 1911-1922. N.A.T.T. Many of these letters are from families in India wishing to track down their relatives in Trinidad. Families would pay for their kin's return

another example, correspondence between 1914 and 1922 from the Madras Depot revealed that the attempts to trace a Shamsher Ali who was thought to have been kidnapped was found to have changed his name to Bagee Sahib. Sahib was said to have a wife and infant son who refused to go to back to India. He stated that his relatives were not well off and there were very poor chances for him to earn a better living in this colony.[150] A later case was that of Deola Mahajan whose son Gluzari Mahajan in India with the help of the All India Cow Association in Calcutta was trying to trace the whereabouts of his father who had migrated to Trinidad and was hesitant in returning to his home in India.[151]

The anti-indentureship campaigns in India and the fact that Indians in Trinidad elected to stay in the colony presented a problem for authorities in London and India. Now they had to decide what effective policies could be enacted to reflect the myriad influences on decision- making that went into migration. After the Sanderson Committee, there was a shift in perspective in the India Office and the Colonial Office regarding the prospects of indenture. India Office administrator S.H. Freemantle declared that "our duty therefore from a purely Indian point of view is limited to securing proper protection for the emigrant while from an imperial point of view we should not place unnecessary obstacles in the of way Indian labour being supplied to British colonies that are in need of it." [152] Evidence about recruiting operations, high rates of prosecution and suicides exposed the social harms emigration caused to the character of Indian emigrants, and as a result, the voices of indentured servants could be brought to a public forum.

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passage. Unfortunately we do not have many responses from Trinidad. However the ones we do have reflect a mixture of those wishing to return or refusing to repatriate to India.

[150] Letters from India. N.A.TT. We may safely conclude this is the same person as Bagee Sahib and Shamsher Al have the same unique emigrant number: 134703

[151] Letters from Trinidad. 1926-28. N.A.T.T.

[152] Note from Secretary of State for India. *Notes on Action Taken on the Report of the Colonial Emigration Committee.* June 1911 Dept. C&I-Emigration Branch Part A. Proceedings 10-16. File 129. G.O.I/ N.A.I.

Correspondence from the Colonial and India Offices, in England, Indian nationalists within the Government of India as well as the colonial governments in Trinidad reveal another tension between these parties over indentured labour. The administrative machinery of emigration had to change to ensure that Indian migrants would commute their return passages to India. Revisions to emigration legislation had to reflect the benefits Indians had incurred after finishing their term of indenture. Conditions and the need for labour were the connecting threads among leaders in India, England, and even Trinidad regarding indentureship. However, in terms of discussions on the merits of emigration, there was an increased awareness to include an Indian perspective to stem growing resentment against emigration. This tactic served as a conduit to examine India's role in the Empire and the merits of "imperial citizenship". By incorporating the Indian perspective, defects in the indentureship system that harmed social customs of Indian emigrants such as those pertaining to family life and customs came to the fore.

Delegates of the Sanderson Committee agreed that "emigration from India should be permitted to Colonies that have spare land capable of development and are willing to allow time-expired immigrants to settle on such land. Indians who have completed their term of indenture should be in all respects free men and no whit inferior to those of any other class of people resident in the colony."[153] However, growing national interest in India as well as the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Society operating in London sought to stop indentured emigration because of malpractices in the recruiting operations and the harm they did to the moral status of the Indian labourer who went abroad. In 1912, Lord Crewe Secretary State for India, observed:

> The most important are that grants of land should be provided for immigrants who wish to reside in the colony as peasant proprietors after the expiry of their indenture, and that these colonists should be helped to settle the land. Re-indenture should not be permitted and arrangements should be perfected to facilitate the obtaining of employment as free labourers by immigrants who have passed their probation, but who are not prepared to settle

[153] *Ibid.*

> on land, nor as yet entitled to an assisted passage to India. Possibly some action is required to secure freedom and equal rights to all immigrants whose indentures should be expired.[154]

Additional land grants to Indians would not only provide the incentive to stay, but also signal to the Indian government that the welfare of Indians abroad was a priority. However, this endeavour in the early twentieth century was met with caution by Governor LeHunte of Trinidad who protested that the payment of Crown land in instalments as promised to Indians but not to "Creoles," would lead to tension between the two races.[155] Land and the ability to cultivate one's own plot would reinforce the freedom granted to the Indian when the period of indentureship was over; however, this freedom excluded those Afro-Trinidadians who were also in competition for land and resources.

VIII. Conclusion

This chapter highlights the fact that the practice of indigenizing Indian migrants under the indentured scheme was entangled in an internal and external struggle over the use of cheap labour in Trinidad and the rest of the British Empire. Indians responded to their environments in many ways that allowed them to climb the social economic ladder and achieved a better livelihood. Most importantly, the development of Crown lands marked the beginnings of distinct Indian communities on the island.

Between the planter and the administrator, the mobility of the Indian was a source of tension that was indicative of their competing visions over the development of Trinidad's industries. Conflicts over wages, recruitment practices and labour offences illustrate this tension which then became embroiled in the pursuits of Afro-Trinidadians and Indian nationalists who saw the indentureship system as a road-block to becoming equal members in the Empire. I n sum, the practice of indentureship hindered their own sense of social and

[154] Lord Crewe Secretary of State India. India Office. 1912 I.O.R. L/PJ/6/1204 File 53. B.L.
[155] *Ibid.*

economic well-being. Here one can see how the liberal idea of imperial citizenship both included and excluded different sets of people. This can be seen over the competition of resources as in the case of the T.W.A. or the loss of caste among Indian nationalists. The position of the Indian free and indentured labourer was connected to many political developments both on and off the island that were occurring at any given time. This is an important stepping stone in understanding the multiple affiliations Indians could have during a time of constitutional reform.

Chapter 2

Canadian Presbyterians, Education and the Making of an East Indian Elite

> If the Maritime Synod had no further reassurance for its Foreign Work, in New Hebrides nor Demerara nor Korea, Trinidad alone would be a rich reward for labour expended. To take one of the many colonies of the Empire, and transform what will be a chief element in its population from the condition in which they are come from India, to what many of them are is a great work when viewed in its relation to all future time and infinitely greater in view of eternity.[1]

I. Introduction

This chapter will examine the role of the Canadian missionaries in Trinidad. In the previous chapter, the settlement of Indians was used to explore the relationship between planters and settlers over the management of labour. The economic benefits of land afforded Indians the ability to settle in Trinidad, and they were becoming productive citizens in the colony by providing cheap labour in various industries, or by becoming proprietors. Whereas grants of land appeased Indian migrants from returning to India, success in schooling and to a certain extent, conversion of their children, socialized them to become permanent members of Trinidadian society.

In the midst of successive waves of new recruits from India came the Canadian missionaries, who, with strong conviction, thought it their moral and religious duty to Christianize Indians in Trinidad and eventually in other areas of the West Indies such as British Guiana, St. Lucia and Grenada. Between 1867 and 1920, notable Canadians such as John and Sarah Morton and Kenneth James Grant focused their energies on the children of

[1] Sarah E. Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad: Pioneer Missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies* (Toronto,1916), 456. Note: this journal is a compilation of the letters written by both Sarah Morton and her husband John Morton. As testimony to his work in Trinidad, Sarah Morton combined her letters as well as her husband's as tribute to their work and the Presbyterian Mission. In this book the larger font indicates Sarah's impressions of the Mission, while the smaller font indicates excerpts that she chose from her husband's letters, sermons and reports or even other notes from respected missionaries Chapter II on 'Historical Notes' was written by John Morton who travelled to London on furlough and gathered material on this chapter at the British Museum.

time-expired Indian emigrants who were born on the island. The timing of the Canadian mission to Trinidad was providential, as only 22 years had elapsed since the arrival of the first Indian. It is because of the arrival of the missionaries and their close connections with the colonial authorities that the emergence of the category "East Indian" began to take root in Trinidad's plural landscape. Whereas the term "East Indian" was an administrative one used by colonial authorities to distinguish those Indians who had settled in Trinidad, the proselytizing efforts of the Canadian missionaries were conscious attempts to recondition the religious and cultural identities of Indian migrants and especially those of their children.

These missionaries, who had dual roles as teachers and catechists, provided East Indian children with a Christian education that was modeled on the English/Canadian school and supplemented by a British curriculum. Scholars such as Carl Campbell argue that the Presbyterian schools were an integrative force which served as a means of introducing East Indians into Trinidad's larger multiethnic society.[2] Brinsley Samaroo has also illustrated how the missionaries aggressively infused school curricula with Christian values and drew heavily on the Canadian experience, complete with stories of snow and ice, beavers, and sports such as tobogganing. The result was the "socialization of a generation after generation of East Indians into Canadian/Christian ontology."[3] This would have a dramatic effect on the political outlook of East Indians leaders and their organizations.

This process was far from simple; generational conflict over religion and education as well as engagements with Indians forced the Canadians to create new forms of spreading the news of Christianity. The practice of missionary work was modernized through the use of language, the establishment of a native church, and the participation of missionaries in

[2] Carl Campbell, *Colony and Nation, A Short History of Education in Trinidad and Tobago* (Kingston, 1992), 14.
[3] Brinsley Samaroo, 'Education as Socialization Form and Content in the Syllabus of Canadian Presbyterian Schools in Trinidad in the late 19th Century', *Caribbean Curriculum*, 6 (1996), 23-37.

various commissions to Trinidad so that schools and churches would be instrumental in socializing Indian migrants into Trinidad and Tobago's colonial society.

The story of Canadian missionaries in Trinidad extends the debate about whether or not missionary activity advanced European colonial expansion. Scholars such as Hilary Carey and Andrew Porter have questioned whether missions facilitated the advance of European empires or were religious and apolitical in nature. Some argue that missionaries supported the imperial project while others firmly rejected this proposition.[4] John Moir's examination of early Presbyterianism in Canada and the growth of its Foreign Missions sections suggest that the efforts of Canadian Presbyterian churches were never in doubt of the interwoven relationship between evangelism and imperialism. In fact, those who went abroad were all willing to share in the God- given task of the white man's burden.[5] In Trinidad, the arrival of the Canadian missionaries and their efforts amongst the East Indians, demonstrated this entanglement of Christian conviction with commercial enterprise. At Greyfriar's Presbyterian Church in Port of Spain, John Morton, the pioneer Canadian Presbyterian exclaimed: "Why was the East Indian brought here? Some discontented ones will tell you that it was fate, or some lying recruiter, or the Devil that did it. I put Satan out of the question, but whatever part the others severally had in the matter, as agents, the God of Providence and Grace brought them here, for their own good, for the good of Trinidad, and to give the Christians of this island a splendid opportunity for dealing with heathen people."[6] On one level, Morton's statements reflect how the civilizing mission sought to mould Indian migrants into becoming

[4] Hilary Carey, *Empires of Religion* (Cambridge, 2008); Andrew Porter, *Religion vs. Empire? British Protestant Missionaries in Overseas Empire* (Manchester, 2004).
[5] Canada was relatively late in carrying out missions in foreign lands. The first mission abroad was established in the New Hebrides under the guidance of the Reverend John Geddie in 1846. This was in response to a request from the Secession Church in Scotland and the London Missionary Society (L.M.S). After this experiment Trinidad's mission was set up in 1867 and was succeeded by missions set up in Fomosa (1872), Central India (1877), Honan, China (1888), British Guiana (1896), Korea (1898), South China(1902) and Gwalior, India (1904). John S. Moir, *Enduring Witness. A History of Presbyterianism in Canada* (Toronto, 1987), 145.
[6] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1892, 'Our Duty to the Heathen People'. Reverend Morton Speeches. Box 10. Presbyterian Church Archives of Canada (P.C.C.)

proper citizens. Secondly, he chooses to cast a myriad of reasons within a Christian framework as to why Indians were brought to Trinidad. This illustrates that whether migration was coerced or voluntary, these decisions had ramifications for those who had an economic or social stake in the indentureship scheme. As well, in the process of including the Indian arrivals within a Christian and colonial framework, the missionaries were agents in creating exclusive East Indian communities that were Christian in nature yet denied the religious identities of Hindus and Muslims, and as shall be seen, the presence of the Afro-Trinidadian.

The publication of personal mission journals and diaries such as *John Morton of Trinidad* (1916) by Sarah E. Morton, *My Missionary Memories* by Kenneth James Grant (1923), and *East Meets West* (1934) by the Reverend F.C. Stephenson, are of paramount value in recapturing not only their experiences in new theatres for spreading Christianity, but also for how their public and private interactions with Indians were crucial in fashioning East Indian settlement. These journals were requested by missionary societies in Canada and printed by the Mission Council in Trinidad to serve as textbooks for mission study in discussion groups,[7] and to be used by the students. Also, the function of these journals and diaries is significant because they are lasting testimonials that sought to memorialize the efforts of various missionaries who came from Canada to serve. With the advent of the printing press, these journals were circulated throughout the island and became a mechanism for binding East Indian communities where a common history of East Indian communities could be read in public.

[7]F.C. Stephenson, *East Meets West* (Toronto, 1934). Stephenson's journal was printed by the Young People's Missionary Education Society in Canada. This organization provided valuable education for those wishing to serve as missionaries in foreign countries.

II. The Activities of Canadian Missionaries

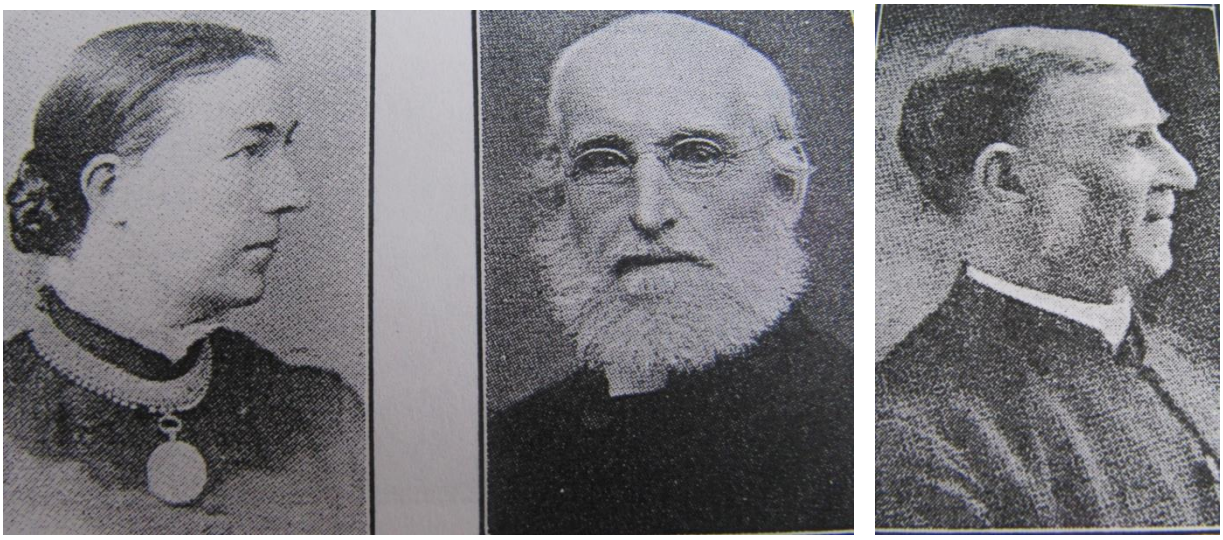

Figure 3: Left to Right: Sarah Etta Morton, John Morton and Kenneth James Grant Source: *Our Work in Trinidad*, (Toronto, 1928), 4-5. United Church Archives of Canada (UAC)

In 1864, John Morton and his wife Sarah left Bridgewater, Nova Scotia on a ship bound for Barbados, so that the warmth of the West Indies could relieve a throat infection that John Morton had contracted. En route, they stopped off in Trinidad, and upon seeing Indian indentured migrants toiling for long hours in the sugar cane fields, Morton received the call that it was his mission to spread the news of Christianity amongst these labourers. In 1868, after petitioning the Foreign Mission Society branch of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, Morton was granted the right to form a mission specifically for Indians in Trinidad. For him, the world of the Presbyterian missionary was spiritually infused and connected by the commercial networks of British Empire.

In the mid- nineteenth century, foreign missions to parts of British North America such as Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island[8] were set up by the Secession Church of Scotland to ensure that the Christian message reached recent European migrants to these new provinces. With regard to Nova Scotia, prominent presbyteries were set up in Pictou and

[8] I switch to the term British North America as Nova Scotia became part of the Confederation of Canada in 1867 and Prince Edward Island until 1873.

Truro which in the future, were to be the homes of many Presbyterians who had dedicated their lives to foreign missions. In his history of the *Secession Church in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island*, James Robertson writes that pioneer Presbyterian ministers such as Dr. McGregor delivered sermons in Pictou and recounted how important it was to Christianize these vast tracts of wilderness. Robertson describes how McGregor encountered twenty families of soldiers (mostly Highlanders), who had been disbanded after the peace accord with the United States in 1783. In these areas there were families of Roman Catholics and Episcopalians. In a footnote to McGregor's efforts, Robertson reflected that with these new settlements, "individuals would go into the bush, and would often sink into a semi- state of barbarism."[9] He wondered if the successful colonization of Pictou and its wealth would have come to full fruition if its period of colonization had not been leavened with Christianity. He stressed that a Christian character had to be impressed upon new countries in their early stages, "for it will be found of nations, as of individuals that as the twig is bent the tree's inclined."[10] When amongst the Highlanders in these areas, McGregor emphasized the importance of setting up schools and education facilities so that both children and parents could be instructed in the Bible. More than sixty schools were eventually set up by McGregor after his observations in Pictou. Thus, colonization, prosperity, education and Christianity were key elements that informed the mindset of Presbyterians when entering foreign lands so that they might civilize non-Christians. It was this continuity of a programme of settlement infused with Christianity that led to the successful mission of Presbyterians in Trinidad.

As a child, John Morton was inspired by his mother's interest in missionary intelligence and her diligence in laying aside money for foreign missions. This was further deepened by letters of John Geddie's work in the New Hebrides. Set up in 1846, the New Hebrides was the first site for Presbyterians in Canada to take their mission abroad. This

[9] James Robertson, *History of the Secession Church to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island From its commencement in 1765* (Edinburgh, 1847), 95.
[10] *Ibid*. 96

appreciation for mission work led him to study at Free Church College, where, by the age of 22, he was ordained a minister and took charge of a congregation in St. John's Presbyterian Church in Le Have River.[11] At the cottage manse at the port of Bridgewater, Morton would see ships bound for the West Indies, and be convinced that missionary work was his calling. Another important missionary who strengthened the Trinidad mission was Kenneth James Grant. Like Morton, his interest in mission work also began in the family home. Grant's missionary education was kindled by books such as Doddridge's *Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*; Boston's *Four-Fold State*; Baxter's *Saints' Rest* and John Angell James' *Anxious Enquirer*. Both John Morton and Kenneth James Grant recalled their mothers reading to them from mission journals and the selfless help they gave to the Foreign Mission societies in Canada. In his journal, Grant writes:

> We had a monthly missionary magazine devoted chiefly to a report of Christian effort in Old Calabar Africa. The labourers in that field were chiefly from Jamaica, British West Indies. Missionaries from the Secession Church of Scotland went first to that island, and when they had become acclimatized, selections were made from them for the West Africa Mission. Their hardships were many; some of the incidents were extremely pathetic; and while we were anxious, as children, to hear stories, we often crept up to brush away the tears that ran down mother's cheeks, as she read them to us. [12]

Also, Grant writes of his mother's kindness to the Micmac Indians, the indigenous/Aboriginal peoples of Nova Scotia who would frequent his parents' home.[13] However, one of the sinister chapters in Canada's history reflects the colonization of indigenous people; missionaries from various denominations coercively assimilated Aboriginal or First Nation Peoples into Canada's society by means of education and conversion to Christianity, and by extension, Canadian missionaries would to a degree repeat the same programme to integrate Indians into Trinidad society; Hinduism and Islam were denounced and East Indian children were coaxed

[11] Graeme S. Mount. 'The Canadian Presbyterian Mission to Trinidad 1868-1912', *Revista/Review Interamericana*, 2 (1977), 32.
[12] Kenneth James Grant, *My Missionary Memories* (Halifax, 1923), 61.
[13] *Ibid*. 22

into the Christian faith with the reward of education. With the help of the colonial government and planters[14] to sustain the education efforts the Presbyterian Church, the school and the East Indian home became inextricably linked; thus, the formation of a Christianized East Indian community marked the transition from temporary sojourners to permanent settlers.

Like the pioneering Presbyterians who came to Nova Scotia to spread the word of Christianity by means of education, Morton had a strong conviction that education would sustain the mission to spread Christianity to East Indians in Trinidad. Both schools and churches were strategically located on estates where East Indians worked. Morton writes in his journal: "These people are taking root in the land, and unless things are mismanaged, they will become a permanent part of the population."[15] It was the duty of British Christians from the West to send a "sufficient agency to carry to them throughout the whole island the bread of life."[16] By gradually moving from the south of the island to the north, Morton concentrated his missionary career on San Fernando (Iere Village) and the Naparimas (Princes Town), Savanah Grande and Tunapuna. These districts were comprised of major sugar estates, cocoa plantations and rice fields. San Fernando was important because it was the key to the Naparimas, also known as the great sugar belt region. As the major town in the south, San Fernando was at the centre of a scheme of roads that connected to places like Pointe-à-Pierre, Couva and Port of Spain, and southward in the direction of the Pitch Lake, Irois Forest and Cedros. To the east of San Fernando, there were roads linking through Iere Village that united Petit Morne Estate, Jordan Hill and Palmyra Estate.[17] Morton studied the landscape of Trinidad by paying attention to the industries East Indians worked in: sugar cane fields in the south and cocoa plantations in the north. He and other missionaries set up schools and

[14] Mount, 'Canadian Presbyterian Mission', 32.
[15] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 155.
[16] *Ibid.*
[17] *Ibid.* 45

churches in close proximity to where East Indians worked, in order to draw as many converts as possible into these institutions.

To Morton, Trinidad was a primordial tropical paradise that was being transformed by East Indian workers who enabled the production of cash crops like sugar and cocoa; however, the island needed 'Christian' cultivation for Trinidad's lands were inhabited by "heathens" who were uneducated. He writes in his journal:

> From Cedros Bay on the Gulf of Paria, across to the Atlantic is only one and a half to two miles; on this narrow strip of country there are six sugar estates, three, within a distance of one mile and a half on the Gulf. Two Indian schools would occupy the territory very nicely-even one good one well managed might succeed in drawing in greater part of the children. All around are the tumbling hills of Cedros, cultivated to their summits, and let us not forget that at least a thousand heathen toil that these hills may flourish. After all the people are more than the place-the men and women and laughing children are infinitely more than the account of the cane fields and pastures and scenery.[18]

Almost like a distant echo of the Scottish Presbyterians in Nova Scotia, statements from the reports on the Trinidad Mission read as follows: "Let our Church bring the same earnestness into the work of cultivating the moral field or wastes of Trinidad in humble dependence upon Him who waits to bless."[19] Through the journals of both Morton and Grant, one can trace the progression in which Christianity became intertwined with education and colonization. In geographic terms, Tunapuna was the centre of the Presbyterian Mission in the northern part of the island. From there the tentacles of the Presbyterian Mission gradually moved centrally to Couva and then east to Arima and Guaico. By extension, Morton believed that his work in the north of Trinidad would open up the missionary's way to Nova Scotia.[20] Hence, the Presbyterian mission among the East Indians would forge a bond between Canada and Trinidad that was inextricably bound by Christianity and loyalty to the British Empire.

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[18] *Ibid*. 126
[19] *Home and Foreign Record*, August, 1871, 214. 'Foreign Missions',Sarah Morton Collection (S.M.C.) Binder 1. P.C.C.
[20] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 328.

In the cocoa valleys of Arima, Morton took note of how the town's railway extension would allow for easy transport to observe the progress of Canada's mission in Trinidad. These areas were important because they were Crown lands in which people were settling, and if schools and churches were in place, they would be convenient centres for people to gather. As he visited East Indian settlements, he noted that many of the children and parents wanted an education. Morton remarked: "These settlers know so well who we are and what our message means to Hinduism, that a hearty invitation to open a school and begin religious services among them shows that Hinduism has lost its hold on them, and that they are not afraid of Christian teaching as many of these new immigrants are."[21] Like a shepherd looking after his flock, Morton's religious zeal was important in creating East Indian communities in Trinidad where both children and their parents would become Christians and permanent settlers on the island.

a) Language

To successfully establish the mission in Trinidad, John Morton actively engaged in understanding the Indians who came to work in Trinidad. In his first encounters with them, he noted that they were physically weak, morally unprincipled, untruthful, revengeful and fond of law. Intellectually, they learned quickly and were of a philosophic turn of mind. They were independent thinkers and if won to the Gospel, they would become intelligent Christians.[22] Such ethnographic descriptions that captured the intellectual characteristics of Indians challenged Morton on how best to win them over to Christianity. Often, he would engage in religious debate with both Hindus and Muslims. In one instance, he met with a group of Indians who were listening to a Hindu read a passage on the exploits of Ram from a Nagari book. By way of question and answer, Morton had the opportunity of hearing their views, and then presented to them the simple truths of the Gospel. In the discussion, some of

[21] *Ibid.* 334
[22] *Ibid*. 52

them maintained the diversity of the origin of the human family and debated a number of points in theology and mythology in a friendly way. However, when pressed on matters of religious affiliation, the Hindu retorted: "All you say may be true and good, for you are Buckra men, or Creoles and Christians, but we are Hindus- a different race- and have a Bible and gods of our own."[23] This stress on race illustrated a key point of difference that racialized religious affiliation. In this instance, this particular Hindu was articulating his sense of identity against the influence of Christian missionaries in an environment that was both multiethnic and multiracial.

Therefore, in order to make Christianity more palatable to East Indians in Trinidad, Canadian missionaries encouraged discussions between themselves, Hindu pundits and Muslim imams or kazis. In 1893, Thomas Macrae invited a Muslim leader to debate the tenets of Christianity and Islam. Macrae agreed that the different subjects would be discussed in a friendly spirit. Both established that "if anyone should get angry and use insulting language, he must leave the room. That only one should speak at a time. That our authorities should be viz: The Koran and the Bible."[24] Their discussions were based on the monotheistic foundations of each faith and the merits of each faith in trying to understand the nature of God. By way of reading Psalms from the Bible or passages from the Koran, each representative arrived at an impasse; however, each agreed to hold further discussions. These episodes of exchange in religious knowledge reveal how the Canadian missionary and the East Indian Muslim or Hindu influenced each other, and that the creation of an East Indian community in Trinidad by way of a religious identity was reciprocal in nature.

The Canadian missionaries were met with both eagerness and hostility amongst Indians settlers in their attempts to spread the word of Christianity. To fulfil the duties of the

[23] *Home and Foreign Record*, May 1868, 'Iere Village',179. S.M.C.. Binder 1. P.C.C.
[24]*The Presbyterian Record,* 18, April, 1893, 183, 'Letter from Mr. Macrae'. S.M.C. Binder 5. P.C.C.

mission, Morton utilized the tool of language as a means of conversion. Indian arrivals to Trinidad came from all over the subcontinent bringing with them many languages, such as Bhojpuri, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telegu, Arabic, and Persian. As a means of spreading Christianity, Morton decided to study Hindi under the assumption that this was the language of Hindus who formed the greatest quota of Indian migrants.[25] Hindi was established as the uniform language that served as the main conduit to bring Indians within the fold of Christianity. With the aid of pundits, Morton learned Hindi in order to speak clearly in a language that would enable him to reach out to as many Indians as possible. Learning Hindi also allowed him to translate parts of the Bible, write his own sermons and to provide teachers and catechists with suitable tools for their work. He studied the tracts of the *Bagho Babar* and even compiled an index of words found in the Qu'ran.[26] To bring his project to full fruition, he ordered large amounts of books issued by the Christian Vernacular Education Society for India[27] - an organization that translated Biblical passages into the vernacular languages in India. In 1888, an average of £50 worth of Indian books was sold in connection with the mission. Morton established contracts with other organizations such as the North Indian Bible Society and the North Indian Tract society both of which sold books at discounted prices. He was also grateful to emigration agents in India, who ensured that books needed for mission work were safely stowed in ships sailing from Calcutta with Indian immigrants bound for the West Indies.[28] Morton's strategies also led to the advent of a Hindi printing press that aided the circulation of long lists of Scripture and Hindi literature.[29]

[25] In mission journals and serials the terms "Hindi" and "Hindustani"are used interchangeably

[26] John Morton, *The Canadian Presbyterian Mission to East Indians Trinidad B.W.I 1911* (Port of Spain, 1911),7. At the P.C.C., Morton's book of translations of Hindi words and phrases into English words are preserved. Collections include lists of law terms translated from Hindi to English to Hindi, tracts from the Gospel as well as translations of Psalms and Acts. Also the first Hindi Hymn Book printed by the Canadian Mission Press in Tunapuna is located in this collection.

[27] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 66.

[28] *Maritime Presbyterian.* Annual Report of Schools 1888. S.M.C. Binder 4 P.C.C.. Vasudah Dalmia argues that missionaries in India played a role in establishing Hindi/Hindui as the language of Hindus. In 1803 John Chamberlain arrived in Srirampur. In his excursions with missionaries he picked up enough Hindi to translate tracts of the Bible to be written using the Nagari script. Chamberlain observed that Hindi and the Nagari script

His learning of Hindi complements David Lelyveld's investigations into how Hindustani became the established lingua franca for British administration in India. Hindustani was a linguistic tool of power used by the British as a strategy to order Indian society. By institutionalizing a common language, the British constructed a framework that allowed them to group and order India's diverse ethnic populations. Hindi grouped Hindus as Urdu did for Muslims. Lelyveld argues that "Hindustani would subsume numerous linguistic varieties and their literatures into a single standard language that could be used in dictionaries and grammar books, taught in schools, used for official purposes as well as for new and diffuse genres of communication throughout India."[30] With a limited knowledge of Indian society, Morton subsumed the range of cultural diversity that included both religion and language of Indian immigrants by establishing Hindi as a conduit to spread the word of Christianity. Therefore, through language, Morton was instrumental in shaping a cohesive Christianized East Indian community in which Hindi- an ancestral Indian language, was used as a domestic common tongue to win potential converts. Language ensured the primary goal of conversion, and education, coupled with that of a native ministry, would ensure the success of the mission.

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were the common vernacular modes of communication. If tracts of the Bible were transmitted and disseminated using these forms of speaking and writing conversion would be easier. Chamberlain translated the New Testament into Hindi in 1818 and inaugurated an enterprise in translating the Bible for Indian audiences. The Calcutta Tract and Book Society (1823), the Benaras Tract Society (1827) and The North Indian Tract Book society (1858) as well as the American Presbyterian Mission in India were responsible for printing copies of Hindi tracts and books that were used in their proselytizing efforts. Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions. Bharat Harischandra and Nineteenth Century Benaras*. (Oxford, 1997). 171. These societies set the precedent of spreading the word of Christianity to Indians; a tradition that was also successful among Indian migrants in Trinidad.

[29] *The Canadian Presbyterian Mission to East Indians Trinidad B.W.I 1911* (Trinidad, 1911).p.7. Serials like the Trinidad Presbyterian would have Hindi supplements

[30] David Lelyveld,'The Fate of Hindustani', *Society for Comparative Studies in History*, 35 (1993), 668. See also Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton,1996), ch. 1.

III. Early Converts

Figure 4: Reverend "Babu" Lal Behari Source: *Our Work in Trinidad*. (Toronto. 1928). 5. UAC

Conversion of the Indians to Christianity was the primary goal for the Presbyterian missionaries, to stimulate the growth of the Trinidad mission. Early converts led to a rapid growth of an East Indian Presbyterian cohort who became catechists, teachers and evangelists. In fact, by 1888, many Sabbath services were conducted by Indian converts. This cohort worked alongside Canadian missionaries and over time came to outnumber the mission staff. Morton used these new converts to combat the difficulties he had in winning over to the faith many learned Hindus and Muslims. In one case, Jaipargas a Christianized Indian, encountered a Brahmin on a train to Port of Spain. The Brahmin questioned why those Indians who had converted to Christianity were speaking against the religion of their country, meaning India. Jaipargas answered: [Yes], "our country is great, our mountains are high, but we are a nation of slaves; other people rule over us because they have a better religion. Christian nations have no idols and get power in this world." [31] In speaking to his countryman, Jaipargas' words illustrated that Christianity provided a gateway to liberation

[31] *The Maritime Presbyterian*, 14 February, 1884, 110, 'Letter from Reverend K..J Grant to Women's Foreign Mission (W.F.M.) Society', S.M.C. Binder 3. P.C.C.

from the ancestral ties of the Indian homeland. The traditions of India were seen as backwards and a hindrance to one's ability to improve one's status in society.

Notable converts included Lal Behari, Charles Clarence Soodeen, Arthur Tedjah, Kantoo, David Mahabir, Joseph Annajee and Benjamin Balaram. These men became elders in churches and were also administrators in church matters. Often, they would seek new converts in the barracks, talk to Indian labourers in the fields and even go to India to serve as missionaries. By training these early converts in catechism by means of Bible tracts translated into Hindi as well teaching them English, Morton created a professional missionary staff that was capable of running different parts of the entire missionary enterprise at various points on the island. Often one reads of East Indians, trained as catechists, taking over schools because they were fluent in both Hindustani and English.[32]

"Babu" Lal Behari (1850-1915) is of particular interest because as early as 1870, he was named as a native evangelist on the Foreign Mission Staff for the Presbyterian Canadian Mission. He became a friend and confidant to both Kenneth James Grant and John Morton in which his conversion story and efforts were given credit when both journals were serialized. The friendship between Behari and Kenneth Grant is significant. In his memoir, Grant writes about the career of John Eliot (1604-1690) who was a missionary amongst the First Nations in New England.[33] Eliot's own mission work inspired Grant to spread the Christian message in foreign lands. However, for Christianity to take root, Grant took notes from Eliot in that the success of any Christian mission project must have the aid of a native ministry. This would enable native converts to go amongst their own people and educate them about the rewards of Christianity. As Lal Behari was one of the earliest converts in Trinidad, Grant took it upon himself to ensure that the former had a place in the history of the Canadian mission.

[32] *Presbyterian Record*, 1883. 100, Calcutta Village School run by Madhusudin, Milton School, Exchange School run by Gadjadhar , Waterloo School run by Ramjas. S.M.C. Box 3. P.C.C.
[33] Grant, *Missionary Memories*, 116

Behari was born in Arrah, India and belonged to the Kshatriya, or military caste. As a boy, he was instructed by a pundit, but upon seeing the abuse of low caste individuals, Behari wanted to escape his situation. Morton writes: "His heart craved too for something that he had not yet found."[34] Behari travelled to Benares where he befriended a Brahman who would quench his thirst for religious knowledge and bring him comfort. He tasted the waters of the Ganges, but found no answers to his prayers. After many days, he met an agent at the emigration house in Calcutta and boarded a ship bound for Trinidad. Three years later, he heard the words of Kenneth James Grant, who had taken charge of the mission in San Fernando and upon listening to the Gospel, became keenly interested in Christianity. In Morton's journal, Behari was like "Nicodemus, entering the missionary premises to learn the way of salvation and light."[35] He copied religious tracts imported from India, was baptized, and took it upon himself to preach the Christian message. In fact, Behari bemoaned that the books of Islam and Hinduism were full of mass contradictions.

His conversion served as a testament to the success of the mission project in Trinidad. Indians who renounced their ancestral faiths and were baptized as Christians, and who became leaders in the Presbyterian Church were now classified as being part of a "native" mission. Hence, the efforts of both Canadian missionaries and native converts conditioned the processes by which new communities of Indians began to form. Much in the same way the relationship between planters and the colonial administration was instrumental in fixing the Indian to Trinidad with the prospect of owning land, the Canadian missionaries utilized Christianity as an internal mechanism to make Indians see Trinidad as having both material and spiritual benefits. However, this process was far from simple as oftentimes, tensions erupted between Indian migrants and missionaries. These episodes characterized the means by which Indians were becoming part of (or being creolized into) Trinidad's physical and

[34] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad,* 109. Behari's story is also to be found in the *Presbyterian Record*, 1877, S.M.C. Binder 3. P.C.C. and in Kenneth Grant, *My Missionary Memories,* 116.
[35] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad* ,109.

multiethnic landscape that had repercussions for Indians and the missionaries. In examining the relationships between the missionaries and Indian migrants, it can be seen that indigenizing the Indian to Trinidad entailed that Christianity carried the weight of belonging to a more superior state that subsumed and even excluded the inferior religions of non-Christians. These developments would craft the means by which East Indian civil organizations would emerge in the public sphere.

IV. The Contribution of Foreign Missions

Morton placed Trinidad at the centre of a globalized network of beneficiaries of donations that was bound by Christian duty and loyalty to Empire. To ensure its success, stories of poor, heathen East Indian children were published in missionary serials in Canada such as the *Maritime Presbyterian*, the *Presbyterian Record* and the *Presbyterian Witness*. As the mission expanded in Trinidad, there was a need for Canadian missionary couples who were experts in teaching. Testimonies and letters written by missionary families were fodder for these magazines and awakened interests in Canada for donations to the Trinidad mission. East Indian children were depicted as ragged waifs being led astray by idolatry. In the *Maritime Presbyterian*, John Morton reported that in Canada, "we give "$10,000 in building schools in Trinidad. The Board will need $30,000 dollars more. For every dollar given in Canada, there is a dollar given in Trinidad. Thus the church bears half the burden. We have sympathy and support from the Governor down to the poorest immigrant. We have 50 schools with 300 children. There are persons converted in Trinidad who do mission work in India. Converts are influencing India."[36] The magazine's circulation increased alongside Morton's transatlantic call to give donations to East Indians in Trinidad and his efforts were rewarded when money for building materials was sent. The *Maritime Presbyterian* pledged to

[36] *The Maritime Presbyterian,* 1881, 110, 'Foreign Missions, Letter from Dr. Morton', S.M.C. Binder 3.P.C.C.

give a yearly installment of $10.00 to cover subsequent costs.[37] Stories of conversion also fetched a good price; for example, Sarah Morton sold the story of Joseph Annajee's conversion to Christianity to missionary societies in India that earned her a total of £21.76*d.*[38] These funds infused the Christian spirit in Canada, and also created a symbiotic relationship between mission work in Trinidad and India, in which the rate of East Indian conversion in the West Indies played a role in missionary work in India.

Donations from the Canadian Presbyterian Foreign Mission Society division strengthened the ecclesiastical bond that churches had with the Trinidad Mission. By the late 1800's, as Canadian overseas missions grew, Trinidad East Indian schools and churches received the most in donations from Canadians, proprietors, the Native Church, the Government, and presbyteries in Truro, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario.[39] According to the 1891-1892 reports, the total donations amounted to £9,340 5*d* 10*d*, of which Canadians gave £4,837 44*d* 6*d.* It should be mentioned that the Trinidad government allocated the second largest sum of money to the Canadian mission in Trinidad in the sum of £2,785,16*s*1*d*. Most of the money was spent on schools.[40] By 1899, almost 36 percent of the donations made to the foreign missions went to Trinidad,[41] and by 1911, 61 Presbyterian schools existed in Trinidad of which $24,903 were given in donations by Canada, while $891,120 was given by wealthy proprietors.[42]. Canadian donations allowed the missionaries to rent Crown land that was paid for by the government. Notable missionaries such as John

[37]*Ibid.* Note that as late as the 1940's publications such as *Tales from Trinidad* (Toronto, 1940), served as tributes to the Presbyterians in Trinidad. In this publication stories about East Indian children who were rescued from the idolatrous faiths of their parents by schooling provided by missionaries would serve as literature to those wishing to enter into foreign missions. A copy of *Tales from Trinidad* is among the UAC archives
[38] *The Maritime Presbyterian,* 1880, 14, 'The Trinidad Mission, Reports for 1880', S.M.C. Box 2.P.C.C.
[39]*Ibid.* 'Trinidad Mission', 1884, S.M.C. Box 3.P.C.C.
[40] *Report on Foreign Missions Committee, Presbyterian Church in Canada , 1891-1892*, 1892, S.M.C. Box 5 .P.C.C.
[41] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 420.
[42] *The Canadian Presbyterian Mission to East Indians Trinidad B.W.I 1911* (Port of Spain, 1911), Appendix D. Table of Comparative Statistics

Morton, Kenneth James Grant, John Wilson Macleod, John Knox, John Fultone, Johnston Coffin and William Macrae, all owned land and set up churches and mission schools in areas of San Fernando, North and South Naparima, Princes Town, Riversdale, Piparo, Lengua, Couva, Monsterrat, Arouca, Tacarigua, Arima, Warren Village and Cunupia Village.[43] In reviewing the donations coming from Canada, Kenneth Grant took notice of the increased trade Canada now had with the West Indies. Steamers from St. John, New Brunswick were continually fulfilling contracts with Trinidad, and Grant hoped that this commercial contact would strengthen ecclesiastical ties.[44] Thus the readership of missionary serials, foreign donations from Canada and trade routes formed an intricate network which anchored the presence and spread the influence of the Canadian missionaries.

[43] Ordinance Recognizing Presbyterian Church, 1873. S.M.C. Binder 5. P.C.C.
[44] 'Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Canada Brief Statement',1874, S.M.C. Binder 4. P.C.

V. Schooling and the East Indian home

Figure 5: Mrs. Thompson and Girls of the Home. Source: Sarah E. Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad: pioneer missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies* (Toronto, 1916), 360.

By bringing East Indian Hindu and Muslim children into the fold of Christianity, Canadian missionaries in Trinidad were agents in carrying out the process of what J.A. Mangan, in his text *Making Imperial Mentalities* called ' imperial socialization'. This term meant that individuals and groups within both dominant and subordinate cultures within the British Empire learned by either "means, appropriate values, attitudes and behaviour so as to ensure the survival of the imperial system." Their mission became strengthened in educational efforts based on an English curriculum. Therefore, schooling and higher access to education aided the process by which East Indians became socialized into the imperial framework of Trinidad. This process was also partly shaped by colonial authorities wanting to keep East Indians tied to the land as well as pandering to the proselytizing efforts of the Canadian

mission. Influencing children was critical to this enterprise of maintaining imperial control; Mangan reiterates the commonplace observation that youth have a greater facility to adapt to severe cultural change, and in consequence, strenuous efforts by the dominant to socialize the young have been a feature of imperialism.[45]

Educating East Indians satisfied both the official desire to keep them from returning to India and the strong convictions of missionaries to bring them within the Christian fold. However, the strong tenets of Hinduism and Islam that were the markers of the cultural heritage of Indian emigrants proved to be obstacles in getting them to convert to Christianity. Hence children were important players in the missionaries' campaign. Kenneth Grant stressed that schools specially provided for East Indians was paramount in bringing the children to Christ, but it would be difficult because the East Indians were "separated from Western nationality, language, dress, and habits of life, social customs and prejudice."[46] Grant dismissed East Indian parents as uncaring beings who did not value the idea of education and argued that their habits doomed the lives of their offspring. With central missions and schools children could be saved. He compared converting children to plastic that could be operated on, and daily church services would provide opportunities to mould them.[47]

Schooling began in the home, and Canadian missionaries frequently visited East Indian homes to preach Christianity. Grant writes: "to these little lambs not the dry hay but tender grass with the dew of heaven on every blade could be served...the influence of a Christian training school would have a humanizing effect on the home."[48] In one of her letters, Sarah Morton wrote about travelling through the villages in San Fernando whereupon one evening she witnessed the *RamLeela* festival that featured the Hindu god Ram. As the play ended, Morton got into a free conversation with the audience and presented them the

[45] *Ibid.* 3
[46] Grant, *Missionary Memories*, 81.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid.* 82

"saving truths" of the Gospel. As husband and wife, both John and Sarah Morton would visit estate barracks and teach children in small groups, sing hymns and do some formal preaching in little galleries.[49] . Miss Fitzpatrick who taught in the San Fernando area wrote of attending Muslim feasts at which Grant explained that such gatherings and customs could be turned to Christian uses. It was important that young family members in these households be turned away from customs such as caste, so that succeeding generations could easily be integrated in Trinidad society.[50] As much as missionaries put forth their idea of the superiority of Christianity, they had to work within the social and cultural framework of Muslim and Hindu households to increase the rate of conversion.

To advertise schooling, Sarah Morton would pass through the villages and hold lessons on the doorsteps of East Indian homes on the importance of the Bible. A labourer in named Kunjah from Iere Village, San Fernando welcomed her to teach his three children and invited the neighbor's children as well. The aim of Morton was to awaken interest and thus draw the children to Iere Village School.[51] She was able to gather twenty children and soon moved the fledgling school into a church where she taught them the English alphabet by using stories from the Bible.[52] It was customary that after giving picture lessons of Biblical stories, she would distribute postcards from Canada to children, to decorate their homes.[53] These benevolent gifts bestowed by the Canadian missionaries aroused the curiosity of children and was effective in bringing Christianity within the home.

The wives of Canadian missionaries in particular shouldered the task of educating Indian women in Trinidad. Sarah Morton along with succeeding Canadian women provided a basic school curriculum that covered literacy. Educating young girls was important to the

[49] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 68 &83.
[50] *The Presbyterian Record,* 18, April, 1893, 182, 'Letter from Miss Fitzpatrick', S.M.C. Binder 5. P.C.C.
[51] Morton, John Morton of Trinidad, 73.
[52] *Ibid*. 56
[53] *The Presbyterian Record*, 29, November, 1891, 38, 'Foreign Missions. Letter from Sarah E. Morton', S.M.C. Binder 5. P.C.C.

missionaries for it prevented early marriages. Female missionaries trained Indian women in domestic sciences that helped them in learning Christian scriptures. In Tunapuna, Sarah Morton with the help of Mrs Thompson and Adella Archibald opened a Home for Girls. Here girls were taught Hindi, English, gardening, Writing, Arithmetic, grammar, composition and History. As well, Sarah's daughter Agnes Morton assisted in daily sewing classes where the girls learned to cut and sew garments including English dresses and jackets.[54]

Reading materials in the Home for Girls consisted of Christian catechisms in Hindi and a Zenana reader used by female missionaries that were suitable for wives and housekeepers. The Zenana readers and the figure of the Zenana, are of key interest because it pertains to the role of high-caste Indian women in the household back in the subcontinent.[55] In the Trinidadian context, the interactions between female Canadian missionaries and their female Indian subjects illustrated how aspects of the familial sphere were undergoing a transformation. Reverend Grant wrote that education would lead women to become teachers or even managers at their schools. It was his hope that Indian mothers would see their daughters, by means of schooling, occupy spheres of usefulness and honour and be "emancipated from the rigours of social usage and better qualified to make [their] own choice".[56] Thus, the family dynamics of Indian families were undergoing change through the work of Canadian missionaries: It also illustrates how the construction of gender roles in the family particularly that of women sustained the momentum of the missionary presence in Trinidad. More importantly, future Christian East Indian women would occupy an important place in the creation of the East Indian community in Trinidad. [57]

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[54] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 349.
[55] Claire Midgely, *Feminism and Empire, Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (New York, 2007), 112. See also And Antoinette Burton, 'From Childbride to Hindoo Lady, Rukhambai and the debate on Sexual Respectability in Imperial Britain', *American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), 1119-1146.
[56] *The Presbyterian Record*, July 18, 1892, 262, 'Letter from Reverend K.J. Grant'.
[57] For an interesting discussion on how Canadian missionaries prepared East Indian women for marriage to prominent East Indian men within the Presbyterian Church see Anna Mahase, *My Mother's Daughter* (Trinidad, 1992).

For lessons in reading and writing, books such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Little Folks of England* by Isa Craig Knox that was printed by Cassel and Company in London were used.[58] Lessons in *Little Folks of England* consisted of British history that described the conquests and heroic deeds of Britain's monarchs as well as their victories in extending the Empire into places such as Canada, India, Egypt and other parts of Africa. The introductory chapter on the Roman conquest of Britain reads as follows:

> Romans taught the Britons to use money, to plough to weave, to build and to plant gardens; and they brought apples, and roses, and other fruits and flowers to Britain. Better still, they set up schools and taught British children to read and write: and had learnt it themselves. It is possible that some of these Roman missionaries may have heard of Christianity from the lips of the apostle of St. Paul.[59]

Reading material brought into the home that had a Christian and British outlook, was instrumental in shaping the consciousness of East Indian youth. Civilization and Christianity became synonymous with the creation of British institutions, and schools would provide the means of attaining an education to gain mobility in society. Moreover, the power of Britain's wealth, army and territorial possessions pervaded the lessons in these books, which made children admire, respect, and value Britain.

Even though the proselytizing efforts of the missionaries were bolstered by education, missionaries met with resistance that challenged both teachers and the identities of East Indian communities. Sarah Morton writes in her diary: "At the next house I knew at once that three of my nicest children were not likely to come to school that day; why, I could not make them tell me. I went into the room and saw the true reason. There was an idol being worshipped all the week in that house, and they had to stay and watch the idols and their offerings." [60] Christianity and education were entwined, but resistance exhibited by East Indian children broke this bond in which a private realm dedicated to religion was held

[58] Isa Craig Knox, *Little Folks England* (London, 1899),5
[59] *Ibid*. 355
[60] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 244.

separate from the public entity represented by schools. This liminal space that occupied the Indian consciousness demonstrated that many were aware of the fact that education was a means to gain mobility in society, but not at the cost of their religious identity. At this point, the secular world of formal education could co-exist only with the private world of religious identity of the household. Towards the end of Morton's mission in Trinidad in 1911, he spoke of the "Hidden Ones" or large numbers of people who were secret believers in Christianity, as illustrated by the following incident. "A few months ago a well known prominent Hindu became ill, and was visited frequently by our men…He was a Christian at heart and if you open him you will find he was a Christian inside, but he was a coward like myself and many others who are afraid to acknowledge themselves Christian before their fellow countrymen."[61] Other missionaries feared that most of those who listened to their words attentively gave evidence that they understood their message, but shuddered at the thought of renouncing the faith of their fathers. Rather, they hoped for accessions from the ranks of young people. This unspoken and private conflict of religious identity that caused rifts between generations of Indian settlers would frame the way East Indian leaders would publicly represent the needs of their respective communities.

VI. Planter and government support for East Indian schools

Planters gladly welcomed the cooperation of Canadian missionaries in helping to build and maintain supported missions schools for East Indians. Graeme Mount writes that "while the missionaries sought to help the East Indians, the planters wanted profits." [62] Between 1876 and 1891 in the mission valley of Savanah Grande (Princes Town), fifteen schools were in operation with the help of planters. Schools were located in San Fernando, Marabella, Concord (north), Picton and Wellington, Canaan, La Fortune, Jordan Hill, Mount Stewart, the Mission, Fairfield, Esperanza, Sevilla, Exchange, Perseverance and Spring, with

[61] *Ibid*. 234. This is a section called the "Hidden Ones" by John Morton that was supplement by Rev. S.A. Fraser of the San Fernando Field.
[62] Mount, 'Canadian Presbyterian Mission', 37.

694 on the roll and an average daily attendance of 441. In her biography of her husband John Morton, Sarah Morton paid tribute to planters who had contributed funds to various schools and noted the monetary sum they had deposited. Planters such as Hon. A.P Marryat, John Cumming of Port of Spain, William. Burnley, G. Turnbull, John Spiers, John Lamont, Louis Preau. M.Lennon, Messrs Chas of Tennant and Sons, and C.B. Pasly John Spiers, Norman Lamont, James R. Grieg, and the Trinidad Estates Company in total contributed £765,16, 8 of which £300 was contributed to schools in Couva.[63] By publishing the names of these planters in her journal, Sarah Morton strengthened the relationship between the planters and the Canadian Mission. Both the planter and the missionary worked in tandem, through a Christianizing endeavor to make East Indians become part of Trinidad. Schools in the Tunapuna district, where cocoa plantations were abundant and in places such as Maracas Valley, and Sangre Grande, Chiquito were funded by Cadbury of Cadbury Bros., which was a major chocolate firm in Birmingham, England. Cadbury became a personal friend to Morton and was deeply involved in funding the Acono School in the Maracas Valley. He maintained an unflagging interest in his employees in Trinidad and continued to make yearly contributions to the Mission Funds of the Tunapuna District.[64]

[63] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 102.
[64] *Ibid*. 328

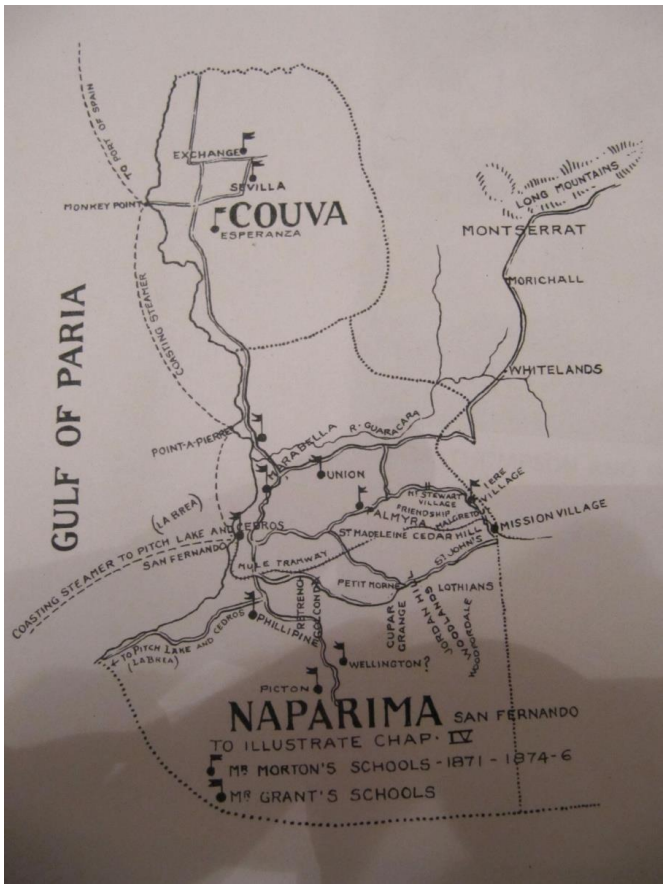

Figure 6: Locations of schools set up by Reverends Morton and Grant 1871-1874 in South Trinidad . Source: Sarah E. Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad : pioneer missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies*, (Toronto, 1916), 423

According to Graeme Mount, Morton also wanted to mend relationships between indentured labourers and plantation overseers in order to quell the violence that kept erupting between the two parties; for instance, overseers were sometimes beaten by their workers in retaliation for depressed wages.[65] By 1899, East Indians who now owned large tracts of lands, offered to support schools. In Calcutta village, which had fifty Christians, it was noted that a good "Brahman" who owned 160 acres of pasturage and cocoa offered a piece of land of 100x100 ft. to the Presbyterian mission to build a school and church.[66] Over time, the philanthropic measures taken by those who donated money for religious structures on behalf of the Presbyterian Church were indiscriminate of class and religious lines. This illustrates the importance of the mission as being a key force in integrating East Indians into Trinidad society.

[65] Mount, 'Canadian Presbyterian Mission', 36.
[66] *The Presbyterian Record*, October, 1883, 100, 'Trinidad Mission', S.M.C. Binder 3. P.C.C.

Schooling in Trinidad at the time of the emancipation of former African slaves and the arrival of Indian emigrants is part of a larger story of Britain's policy to culturally extend its control over Trinidad. Trinidad was once a possession of the Spanish and French powers and Roman Catholicism was the spiritual bulwark of each of these respective empires. Roman Catholic churches were the first to set up schools in the colony and notable secondary schools such as St. Joseph's Convent and St. Mary's, The College of the Immaculate Conception are reflective of the Spanish and French influence in Trinidad. For Britain to cement its conquest of Trinidad, social institutions such as schools were crucial strategic areas. Campbell explains that Mico Charity schools that were funded by wealthy philanthropists in England were geared towards educating former slaves. These schools were Protestant in nature and former African slaves absorbed English values in order to be integrated into Trinidad's multi-ethnic community.[67] However, Roman Catholics preferred to keep their own system of education by using their own school books in which Spanish and French were the languages of instruction. In order to avoid denominational conflict, Lord Harris then governor of Trinidad, set up ward schools in 1849 that were secular in nature.

As early as 1851, ward schools were deemed inefficient in providing a centralized form of education for Trinidad's heterogeneous population and were criticized for not cultivating a Christian consciousness in children. Curricula in the ward schools prescribed lessons in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic and Geography, but each school subjectively tempered its curricula with Christian doctrine, thus creating a system of education that was disconnected and unorganized.[68] In 1869, Patrick Keenan, an Irish Inspector of Schools delivered a scathing review of the ward schools by commenting on their mismanagement. Keenan noted that in 1851, Trinidad's population had been 69,609, of which 10,812 had been born in the different British colonies: 8,907 had been born in Africa; 4,915 had been born in

[67]Carl Campbell, *Colony and Nation* (Kingston,1992), 10.
[68] *Ibid*. 16

other foreign countries; 4,196 were coolies and 729 were natives of the United Kingdom. Even more striking than Trinidad's social complex social stratification, was how religious denomination was imprinted on it. Keenan noted that there were 43,605 Roman Catholics, and 20,440 individuals belonging to the Church of England, a total that was further divided into Wesleyans, Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists and other Christian denomination and with the arrival of Indians, "2,649 Hindoos, 1,016 Muslims, 880 heathens and 1,010 persons"[69] having an unidentified religion were added to the mix.

In his report, Keenan made special reference to Indian emigrants and the lack of proper schooling that the government provided. Prior to the arrival of Canadian missionaries, government- supported "Coolie" Ward schools were set up to educate East Indian children. Notable schools included the Tacarigua Coolie Orphan Home, Newton Coolie School and the Coolie school in El Socorro. In these institutions children were drilled in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Dictation, Arithmetic, Grammar and Geography. Boys were given industrial school training while girls were trained in domestic science. After touring areas such as Naparima, Couva, Tacarigua, St. Joseph, and Macoya, and the estates' East Indian communities, Keenan noted that the government was paternal in providing medical and food assistance to East Indians; however, there was a lack of tools that could harness the moral and intellectual intelligence of East Indian workers.[70] He writes:

> The coolie's mind was left blank. No effort was made to induce him through the awakening intelligence and dawning prospects of his children, to associate the fortune or the future of his family with the colony. It is therefore that- collaterally, and I believe legitimately, I connect the magnitude of the periodical exodus of the Asiatics with the educational system, which fails to provide for their children acceptable schools.[71]

The Tacarigua Orphan Home was of special interest to him because the Agent General of Immigrants, Dr Mitchell, personally admitted orphaned East Indian children into this school.

[69] Patrick Joseph Keenan, *Report upon the State of Education in the Island of Trinidad*, (Dublin, 1869), 48.
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] *Ibid*.

The maintenance of these students was borne by the government at £10 a year with the rest by coming from the labour provided by each child. Children were brought up as Protestants, baptized and given religious instruction that was infused into their daily duties.[72] The surnames given to orphans were taken from the name of the ship that had conveyed them to the colony.[73] At this school, Keenan noted that the children were clever and that the "Coolie's mind possessed a tenacious and solid memory while the Creole's was uncertain and weak. The Coolie can readily recognize the meaning and application of arithmetical process; the Creole is utterly unable to deal logically with numbers."[74] This racialized description of Indian and African intelligence was a lynchpin in the sustained campaigns to educate mainly East Indian children in Trinidad society. Constant refrains were made by governors and planters in Trinidad on the vital importance of East Indian labour and the contributions they made to the island. By virtue of the contribution to labour, the presence of East Indians displaced African identity. While schools were meant to integrate East Indians into Trinidad society, education specifically for Indians enhanced the exclusive nature of East Indian communities.

When Keenan was drafting his report on the state of education in Trinidad, John Morton reinforced the fact that the ward schools set up by Lord Harris did not benefit children. A haphazard curriculum and the lack of funds to provide adequate schools houses and books, put East Indian children at a disadvantage and made their families more prone to return to India. Furthermore, Morton implicitly advocated racially, segregated schools by complaining that ward schools were overcrowded. In some schools, both Afro-Trinidadian and East Indian children were in the same classrooms. Morton remarked: "There were children enough for two schools-one Creole and one Coolie. In such cases should not two

[72] *Ibid*. 99
[73] *Ibid*. 99
[74] *Ibid*. 48

schools be provided and in other cases might two Coolie schools be under one teacher?"[75] Morton's preference for keeping East Indians and Afro-Trinidadian students separate bore a resemblance to Keenan's overt racial sentiment that Indian children were more intelligent. Decisions about school policy regarding East Indians reflected the preferential treatment Britain had for indentured servants and their families. This was indicative of Britain's need to secure a stable and permanent labour force which came at the cost of displacing African identity.

VII. Primary schools

Missionaries, the colonial government and the planters all entered into a partnership to successfully educate East Indian youth in Trinidad. In school, they would be taught basic literacy, but also gain knowledge of modern agricultural practices. Canadian Mission schools would follow the operational framework of Canadian schools and the prescribed curriculum in the colony that followed British standards. The subjects of instruction were Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Dictation, Composition, English, Geography, Singing, and Physical Eduction. Agriculture was for boys and Needlework for girls. Hygiene was introduced as a special subject in coordination with Health Department.[76] As a result, East Indian schools in Trinidad opened the market for Canadian women to become professional teachers through missionary work. Notable women in this respect included not just Sarah Morton, but also Adella J Archibald, Miss Blackaddar, Miss Semple and others.[77]

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[75] *Ibid.*

[76] *Imperial Education Conference. III Educational Systems of the Chief Colonies not possessing responsible Government Trinidad and Tobago 1911* (London, 1913), 5.

[77] *The Canadian Presbyterian Mission to East Indians Trinidad B.W.I 1911* (Trinidad, 1911). See also Ruth Compton Brouwer's *New Women For God. Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions 1876-914* (Toronto, 1990). Here Brouwer investigates the role of Canadian Protestant women in the Presbyterian mission to Central India in order to bring the role that women played in foreign missions back into the consciousness of those who investigate missionary enterprises. Indeed in the Trinidad case women such as Sarah Morton aided their husbands by taking on important roles as teachers and caregivers to East Indian children. This is especially true when these women set up special schools for East Indian girls to train them domestic economy.

Canadian teachers often had difficulties in ushering children into school houses. Also, parents' reluctance to send their children to a Christian school, as well as increasing demands for labour on the plantations caused attendance in schools to fluctuate thus preventing children from fulfilling their educational potential. Adella Archibald, a Canadian missionary woman who ran a small school in Tunapuna, wrote that "many a bribe in the shape of a piece of clothing or a bit of bread or "mitai" candy was accepted by a bright eyed Indian boy[78] in exchange for school attendance. As well, boxes of clothing from the Missionary Society in Canada were given as rewards to students if they diligently attended classes.[79] Interestingly, this act of giving sweets to Indian children parallels how recruiters in India lured emigrants into the depots at Calcutta and Madras. One section of a pamphlet against indentureship read: "The [arkatis], get their money with inducing talks and they induce you by offering sweets."[80] This line of thought casts conversion to Christianity along the lines of the operations that were associated with the physical act of migration. As seen in the last chapter, Indian migration to the colonies involved people either voluntarily electing to leave their homeland or leaving under the shadow of deception. Perhaps the activities of the Canadians who sought to convert the East Indians can be seen in conjunction with the activities of those civil servants in India who looked after the emigration scheme. By turning away from Hinduism and Islam, conversion to Christianity (which carries the promise of rewards) can be regarded as playing a similar part to the hosts of ways in which Indians arrived in Trinidad; choice and coercion were both present. Hence, Canadians became part of a transnational operation in settling Indians in Trinidad that was characterized by partnerships between Indian civil servants and missionaries.

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[78] Adella J. Archibald, *The Trinidad East Indian Mission, in Connection with Presbyterian Church in Canada* (Trinidad, 1922), 18.
[79] Stephenson, *East Meets West*, 67.
[80] Pamphlet by Satyadeva,Satya Granthamala, Johstonegunj, Allahabad, 1915. C.O. 323/717. T.N.A./U.K.

The reluctance to send children to schools illustrated how conversion to Christianity and schooling ruptured the Indian family. F. C Stephenson noted:

> There are many who have dared and many have had to pay the price in social or family ostracism. Only to-day a preacher came to tell us of a young man sixteen or 17 years of age, lately a pupil in our school who has been turned out by his Mohammedan parents. Another young man about the same age once said 'Sahib, you know my parents. They would take away my wife and my baby boy if I were baptized, and Sahib, I love them.' This attitude of opposition usually does not last very long, though it is also true that there has been created of late a more vigorous national spirit and a stronger race consciousness.[81]

Stephenson's observation provides a starting point from which to consider how the missionary zeal to convert children became entangled in the continued support among planters and the government for Presbyterian schools. Indians labourers and their children were the property of planters and wards of the government, so school attendance and funding kept the Presbyterian schools in operation. Education provided by the missionaries needed to comply with the overall project of systemization of education in Trinidad to ensure attendance and funding. Educational endeavours for the East Indian child revolved around the tense balancing act between religious and secular instruction, as well as the practical needs of the labour force. In 1870, Governor Arthur Gordon, following the advice of Keenan, withdrew Lord Harris' system of ward schools, and set up the dual form of education that divided schools into Government Schools and Assisted Schools. With regards to primary schools, the Ordinance stated:

> Schools of Primary Education shall be divided into two Classes, first, Schools already established or to be hereafter established by the Government and to be maintained entirely by public funds of the Colony, and secondly, Assisted schools to be established by Local Managers and to which aid shall be contributed Public Funds of the Colony.[82]

It also made clear that any Assisted School wishing for state funding had to ensure that no child be given any religious instruction. In theory, all schools in Trinidad that were in need of funding had to be secular. However, the proviso of the "conscience clause" allowed

[81] *Ibid.*
[82] Book of Trinidad Ordinances. 1865-1870. An Ordinance with regard to Education. Governor Arthur Gordon. C.O 297/8 T.N.A/U.K.

Presbyterian schools to carry out religious instruction. This "conscience clause" stipulated that religious instruction would be carried out for a certain time, usually in Hindustani in a Presbyterian school. Here a child had a choice of attending these classes, while the rest of the day would be for secular instruction. Under the new Ordinance, Presbyterian schools would be given funding as the colonial administration realised the importance of educating Indian children. Governor Robinson (1885-1891) felt this so strongly that he granted £50 per annum in monthly payments to five new East Indian schools, and by 1889, thirty-one schools were receiving government aid. Robinson stated: "Considering how much the Indians have done to develop the resources of this Colony, the provision of educational advantages for their children is a duty which the Government and their Employers owe to them, and from which there is no escape."[83] For example, a Presbyterian school in Arima was set up and funded by the government in which children of East Indian settlers working on sugar or cocoa plantations were accommodated. These benevolent acts were seen as improving the Indian child with the intention of making him a better citizen; however, paternalistic comments made by members of the colonial administration reinforced the still- subordinate status of Indian children. To effectively illustrate this, Robinson made the following remarks while attending a school production in a Presbyterian school: "All you boys and girls can never hope to attain a high position in life and it would be foolish and certainly over ambitious for you to do so, but you can repay your masters and mistresses for all the kindness and care they have shown you by being good worthy citizens, loyal subjects and industrious settlers."[84] Thus, to the missionary, planter and colonial administrator, the model East Indian child in Trinidad was a dutiful Christian labourer who worked diligently in a plantation economy.

[83] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 76.

[84] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 19 December, 1885, 'The Canadian Mission'. On this particular occasion students from Canadian Mission schools in Couva gave a concert in honour of Governor Robinson and his wife who were paying a special visit to these educational facilities for East Indians. Songs included 'Caledonia', 'The Whistling Thief", 'Forget me Not' and the 'Ivy Greene' Select readings included ' I dreamt I was in Marble Halls'.

Presbyterian teachers were often questioned about the practicality of schooling East Indian children and the overarching goal of mission work. Both Kenneth Grant and Miss Blackaddar were questioned on their ability to unite their vocation as Christian workers with the role of educators. Planters accused missionaries of "spoiling the Coolies, for when they learn to read, they get proud and lazy and are ashamed to work."[85] Proprietors feared that the school work that was aimed at moral and intellectual development would defeat the objective for which the Indian was brought to the island: labour. However, missionaries allayed this fear by stating that attempts were made to unite field work with school work. After Bible instruction in Hindustani, the boys would plant a garden, cut wood, carry water, keep the yard and garden neat and clean, sweep, wash and dust the school house. The girls helped in the washing, ironing, cooking and other domestic work. To further alleviate planter's concerns, hoes were imported from New York to be used in methods of instruction. For example, on Petit Morne estate, a proprietor agreed that children would be welcomed to weed certain patches to enhance their education about the tools used in agricultural work. They would learn to handle a hoe as well as a pen.[86] To secure more students and make more progress, East Indian missionaries such as teachers Charles Clarence Soodeen, Thomas W. Cockey, Aziz Ahmed, Joseph. Annajee, T. Vishnu and Lal Behari were taught Advanced Arithmetic, Grammar, English, History and Algebra.[87] For the mission to expand by means of increased class attendance, missionaries had to interweave their goal of bringing children into the Christian fold between planters and the colonial administration on the management of Indian labour. Hence, curriculum had become more secularized.

In 1890, another Education Ordinance passed by Governor Robinson further clarified the state of Primary education in Trinidad which specifically mentioned Indian emigrants:

[85] *The Children's Presbyterian*, December 28th, 1883, 84 'Miss Blackaddar's Report', S.M.C. Binder 3. P.C.C.
[86] *The Presbyterian Record*, April 1885, 104, 'Our Trinidad Mission', Fourteenth Annual Report by Reverend K J Grant', *Ibid.*
[87] *Maritime Presbyterian* 1885, 14, 'Reverend K J Grant's Eighteenth Year in Trinidad' S.M.C., *Ibid.*

> Children whose parents or guardians are unable to pay for school fees and children of indentured Indians whose indentures have not expired shall be admitted to Elementary Schools free of charge; Provided that the inability of such parents or guardians not being indentured Indian Immigrants to pay school fees shall be proved to the satisfaction of Local Managers in which the school is situate or other public officer to be nominated by the Board.[88]

This Ordinance was of critical importance: by exempting the children of indentured workers from paying school fees, it not only opened further access to education for East Indians, but also served to keep them from returning to India, thus securing labour for the colony.

Carl Campbell notes that an increased need for agricultural education rested with the sugar disaster in the 1890's. Competition with Europe's beet sugar resulted in the Caribbean cane sugar not being able to compete in the world market.[89] The Agricultural Society of Trinidad (1894), the Department of Agriculture (1908) and the Imperial Department of Agriculture (1898) prescribed a curriculum where children would be more inclined to learn agricultural theory. Teachers in Trinidad had to be trained in agriculture and school garden plots would be attached to primary schools to serve as places of instruction.[90] The underlying principle was that an agricultural education was practical in an island where production of cash crops was important to financial survival. In 1899, Agriculture was officially added to the subjects of instruction in elementary schools: Canadian mission schools capitalized on this to make education more practical and useful for East Indian children. Teachers in these schools acknowledged that industry must come more to the forefront and be infused with the knowledge of God.[91]

Agricultural shows and school garden competitions in the Primary Schools fostered the need to instil the importance of manual and agricultural training. Lessons in agricultural

[88] An Ordinance to amend the Education Act 1890, CO 297/13. T.N.A/U.K.
[89] Carl Campbell, *The Young Colonials.* A *Social History of Education 1834-1939*.(Trinidad, 1996), 78.
[90] *Trinidad Presbyterian* January 1910, 5-6, 'C.M. Schools and Agricultural Exhibition' N.A.T.T.
[91] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 427.

theory were disseminated through the school gardens that prepared students for annual competitions. Students grew yams, tannias, ochroes, eddoes, eggplant, and cassava. Missionary teachers regarded the school garden as a living classroom that was nourished by questions such as: What are the best varieties of seeds or cuttings? What is the best soil? How should manure be prepared and applied? What is the best time to plant? In 1909, eight schools in the Tunapuna participated in agricultural shows that were held in Port of Spain during which eighteen prizes for excellent vegetables and fruits grown were given. Governors and prominent men made speeches and printed the names of schools in the newspapers.[92] By 1911, garden competitions had intensified and instead of having one central show in Port of Spain (which prevented other rural schools from attending), it became more feasible to hold shows in Arima, San Fernando, Princes Town, and Scarborough. In addition to school garden produce, there were competitions in map-making, object lessons, nature study diagrams, natural history collections, and carpentry. Boys would compete in their knowledge of budding and forking operations, while girls exhibited their skills in darning, gusseting, patching and other forms of needlework.[93] By allowing East Indian boys and girls to travel to and participate in competitions throughout the island, they became integrated into Trinidad society through the connection of schools. Articles on competitions reinforced the success of Canadian missionaries in their efforts to raise East Indian to be useful members of the colony; additionally, these stories in the paper brought East Indians into the consciousness of readers.

It must be noted that the high emphasis on school gardening and agriculture did meet with resistance among parents and children who wanted to move off the plantations. However, John Morton wrote that a school garden was a better substitute for ancient History[94], and his sentiment was reinforced by education ministers in the country who wrote

[92] *Ibid.* 428
[93] *Education in the Chief colonies not possessing Responsible Government*. *Trinidad and Tobago 1911* (London 1913), 5.
[94] Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad*, 427

that agricultural shows were the best means of overcoming the West Indian's aversion to menial work.[95] Missionaries were aware that many boys wanted to become professional men and aspire to be governors, while girls wanted to turn away from domestic duties. Yet both teachers and catechists in the mission insisted that agriculture was beneficial to students because it led to jobs in commerce and industry and that hard work also disciplined the mind. In fact, students read in the *Trinidad Presbyterian*: "King Edward is said to be a skilled shoemaker and everyone in the Royal family is taught a trade."[96] They were told that Nature Study and collecting specimens encouraged them to learn about God's creations as they wandered through the fields and forests. Teachers who imparted the study of agriculture and the natural world were motivating children to study a new world, and urged parents to cultivate this interest within their children. Curricula in both the Canadian Mission and other elementary schools in Trinidad illustrate a subordinate status between the young colonial subjects in Trinidad and the ruling elite. Education in agriculture would prepare both East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian boys and girls for vocations only suitable in a colony that was dependent on lucrative agricultural industries. However, as in the case of East Indians, the aspirations of a new generation of Indian children who were descendants or recent offspring of indentured labourers, produced tensions between the role of the missionary and the planter. The former had to keep in mind the goals of the mission to serve as a conduit for Christian conversion while the latter had to maintain the East Indian as a vital source of labour.

[95] *Ibid.* 18
[96] *Trinidad Presbyterian*, January 1910, 6, 'CMI Schools and the Agricultural Shows'. N.A.T.T.

VIII. Secondary schools and The Naparima Boys' School

Figure 7: Naparima Boys' Secondary School. Source: *Our Work in Trinidad,* (Toronto, 1928), 11. UAC

Rapid progress was made in the primary schools, and by 1900, there was an increase in the demand for secondary education. Naparima College became the first Presbyterian secondary in school in 1900 that was geared towards moulding educated male East Indian elite in which skills in debate, and leadership were harnessed within a Christian framework. Men who graduated from this school were given the necessary skills to represent both the needs of Christian and non-Christian East Indians in Trinidad so that they could represent both parties.

Kenneth James Grant witnessed that East Indian boys and his own sons aspired to a higher form of education. After four years of primary school, boys would go to Port Spain to enroll in secondary schools such as Queen's Royal College, and then perhaps abroad to universities in Great Britain.[97] As early as 1893, Grant wanted to have a secondary school for

[97] *Education in the chief colonies not possessing Responsible Government. Trinidad and Tobago*. 1911 (London, 1911), 18.

boys; in fact, he held classes in his own home for his son George Grant and other East Indians boys where he taught them rudimentary Latin, Geometry, History and Algebra.[98] In his memoir, he describes having to charge children fees[99] and that he even hired "a coloured" man from Harrison College in Barbados to teach in the schools."[100]

In order to cope with the growing demands in education, a training school was set up by Reverend Grant. It was his view that this Presbyterian Training School would enable aspiring pupils to attain the necessary qualifications to become teachers. As part of the training programme, the school held special classes for boys who wanted to attend secondary institutions. Grant's school operated for sixteen years, and was funded by parents who were willing to pay the salaries of teachers to ensure that their children would attain a higher education. Boys from East Indian and Chinese homes, as well as sons from some of Trinidad's leading families, attended Grant's school. He honoured the strong relationship with planters by educating their children; the sons of notable men among them Charles Pasea, Harragin, Sanderson, Gibbon, Laurie de Gannes, van Buren, Spencer Clarke Le Gay Johnstone and De Barre all benefited from Grant's tutelage.[101] These men went on to Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain, Harrison College in Barbados, Dalhousie College in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada and to an agricultural college in England. Some of these boys then went on to engage in agricultural and mercantile pursuits as well as attaining positions in the civil service [102] Grant's training school fostered interaction between East Indian boys and the sons of proprietors who then challenged the socioeconomic structure of Trinidad that presumed East Indians were meant only for agricultural work. By placing boys on an equal level, they challenged the notion that opportunities for Indians were restricted to the canefield. It was in

[98] Stephenson, *East Meets West*, 50.
[99] Naparima College. 1900. Fees charged to children were between $1 and $3 a month. CO. 295/399.T.N.A./U.K.
[100] Grant, *Missionary Memories*, 45.
[101] Naparima College. 1900 C.O 295/399.T.N.A/U.K.
[102] *Ibid.*

1894 that the government gave full support to the Training College by giving an annual grant and scholarships to six students at time. Successful completion of the course warranted certificates from the Department of Education.

The Presbyterian Missionary council consisting of Kenneth Grant and A.W. Thompson was approached by an East Indian contingent of Susmachar Church that included Charles Clarence Soodeen, who looked after schools in the Lengua Estate, Princes Town; D. Mahabir (Couva); Joga Grant (Princestown); James Durga (Couva) and Timothy Sirju. These men wanted a Presbyterian secondary school located in the south of the island o that their sons would not have to travel to Port of Spain. East Indian petitioners who first suggested the idea for a secondary school justified their claim by stating that a school should be placed in San Fernando because it was situated in an area where large plots of land were being cultivated. It was also argued that a secondary school would honour the work that Canadian missions did for East Indians. This combined effort of East Indians and Canadians demonstrated that East Indians were becoming active participants in endeavours to further education in the colony.

In a note to Joseph Chamberlain, a representative in Trinidad's colonial government wrote: "This [Naparima] is an increase to the education vote in Trinidad which you have told us to keep down; but I think it is beyond question that the proposal should be sanctioned."[103] Delaying the recognition of Naparima illustrated the planter's persistent agenda of keeping East Indians tied to the land as agricultural labourers. It took three petitions for Naparima School to become a recognized school. In 1885, 1887 and 1899, East Indian and even Chinese ministers in Susmachar Church wrote to the colonial government. During the time of the petition, indentured servants from India were still coming to Trinidad and higher education threatened to disrupt management of indentured labour. With East Indians making

[103] Lucas to Chamberlain, 1900 C.O. 295/399 . T.N.A./U.K.

a foothold in education, the colonial government could potentially lose control of the activities of East Indians. Hence, the colonial government had to reinforce an inclination for East Indians to remain in agriculture.

Canadian Presbyterian missionaries were also uneasy about higher education. In response to the petition for Naparima, Governor Maloney stated that it was an Asiatic committee that had approached the Mission Council for a church. However, Kenneth Grant in his memoir, as well as in other missionary pamphlets about Naparima, failed to mention the contributions that East Indians made to the inception of Naparima. Grant envisioned that a secondary school in the south Trinidad would serve as a good training ground for teachers in primary schools who would instill the fruits of Christianity.[104] While teaching would be equated with social mobility, Grant did not necessarily mean entry into the lucrative professions like law, business or medicine. In other words, there was an inherent resistance for East Indian boys wanting to leave their communities to become professionals.

Stipulations in the Education Ordinance of 1870 allowed Naparima College for Boys to be affiliated with Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain. Section 22 of the Ordinance stated:

> It shall be lawful for the Council from time to time to declare any school of Secondary Education already established or hereafter within this Island to be a School in connection with the Royal College and the pupils above nine years of age of every such school which may be so declared to be in connection with the Royal College, on passing such examination at the Royal College as may be required of the college shall be Students of the Royal College.[105]

Naparima College also benefitted from funds from the government as it was affiliated with Queen's Royal College. Section 23 of the 1870 Education Ordinance stipulated that

> All schools which shall be declared by the Council of the College to be schools in connection with the Royal College shall be entitled from year to year to Aid from the public funds of the Colony, to consist First-of a fixed salary to the Principal or

[104] Grant, *Missionary Memories*, 136.
[105] Education Ordinance 1870 C.O 297/8 T.N.A/U.K.

> Head of such school; Second-a Capitation grant for each student over nine years of age, who shall have received a Certificate from the Principal of the Royal College of his having given during the preceding Twelve months such number attendances at the Royal College as the Council of the College shall determine;- Third, a Capitation Grant on the results of the annual examinations at the Royal College of the pupils of such School; and Fourth, premium on the entrance of each pupil of such School as a student of the Royal College.[106]

For Naparima School, a grant of £300 was made in which £200 was given as a salary to Kenneth Grant, who was its first headmaster. In addition, a maximum capitation grant of £100 was annually awarded to the school in which £5 (up to a maximum of 20 students) was granted to every pupil who passed the examination at Queen's Royal College.[107] Over time, the amount increased to £450. The petition for Naparima Secondary School demonstrated that East Indians who had benefited from a Presbyterian education became active participants in wanting access to higher levels of education.

Naparima College, like the primary schools, was seen as a triumph in the eyes of the Foreign Mission Society in Canada, and was the subject of much interest in journals that covered projects abroad. Naparima epitomized John Morton's vision of a school that could have a dramatic effect on Indians in which men would carry out evangelical activities by spreading the message of the Gospel.[108] The secondary school symbolized a partnership with the government and Christian education. During the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the mission in 1928, articles boasted that from the 14,000 boys enrolled in Presbyterian primary schools there were high aspirations to attend Naparima where they matriculated for Cambridge Examinations. These factors instilled a sense of pride in Canadian readers and were outlets to advertise for donations to be made to the Canadian mission in Trinidad.

[106] *Ibid.*
[107] Naparima College. 1903 CO. 295/399.T.N.A./U.K.
[108] *The Witness*, 1925 'The Mission of the United Church in Trinidad'. By Rev. A.E. Armstrong. U.A.C.

Monetary values were printed on the backs of leaflets identifying what schools needed: for example, $28,000 was needed to build an extension to Naparima Secondary School.[109]

Teachers at Naparima College were drawn from the Presbyterian Training College as well as Canadian universities. F.C. Stephenson writes that the teachers were men of high standing and strong personality, among them being Principal E.W. Coffin PhD of Calgary Norma School; Reverend H.A. Kent DD of Queen's University; Professor, E.W. Nichols, PhD of Dalhousie; Prof. C.G. Cumming, DD. of Bango Theological College and Reverend C.T Baille DD of Chicago.[110] Other teachers included Daniel Forrester MA of Queen's University, who held degrees in Forestry, History and English. He came to Trinidad on a two year contract, and upon completion, went to Oxford to study History.[111] Some Canadian educators were employed by Naparima specifically for their knowledge in Agriculture. For example, in 1916, Reverend W.A. Hunter, MA, BD Principal of the Kenton High School Manitoba, left his post in Canada and was appointed headmaster of Naparima. He was qualified in agriculture and manual training in woodwork and handicrafts. He also held an arts degree from Manitoba College and a theology degree from Montreal College with post graduate work in Edinburgh and Glasgow. He was successful not only in his academic teaching, but also in the Cadet Corps. Hunter served as a student volunteer in Foreign missions while he was taking a course in Bible training from the University of Toronto. He was described as evangelically sound, and of a missionary spirit.[112] Hunter is an important figure because he was able to teach agriculture courses that were necessary for training students in countries where cash crops sustained the economy. He was able to blend his teaching with Christian dogma as well as mould the minds of young men by training them in

[109] Forward Series of Foreign Missions Leaflets No. 2 1928,*Trinidad and Guiana*. U.A.C. Note: in Canada there is a split between the Presbyterian Church in which members formed the United Church of Canada that took over the Foreign Missions. However, in Trinidad no distinction is made between these churches. Presbyterian Church is synonymous with work among East Indians
[110] Stephenson, *East Meets West,* 66.
[111] *Trinidad Presbyterian*. October 1913 ,19, 'Canadian Church News' N.A.T.T.
[112]*Ibid*. November 1916 , 20, 'News of the Churches' N.A.T.T.

Physical Education. The appointments of Canadian- trained teachers as well as headmasters to Naparima not only strengthened the tie between Canada and Trinidad, but also Canada's bond with England. The Trinidad Mission enabled the professionalization of the teaching classes in Canada as Trinidad opened up a new market for teachers to gain valuable experience. Canada's trade in teaching was vital in educating East Indians to make them useful citizens of the colony and thus keep them from returning to India.

Some teachers were children of Canadian ministers who were born in Trinidad, but were educated in Canada, America, or Europe. Often the *Trinidad Presbyterian* alerted readers when teachers from abroad were appointed to Naparima. This tactic served to elevate the name of Naparima College as a school that was dedicated to educating East Indians and a symbol of the hard work of the Canadian mission project. For example, in 1915, John Morton Thomson, eldest son of Reverend A.W. Thomson of M.A. Knox Church, Pictou returned to Couva to become the second master in Naparima College. He received the highest grade for teaching as well as the gold medal for high academic achievement in Nova Scotia.[113] As well, Mr. Charles Cumming, M.A. younger son of Reverend Dr. Cumming arrived in Naparima after studying in American, Canadian and European Institutions. [114] The appointments of Morton Thomson and Cumming further demonstrate that the strength of the Canadian mission rested in family, and that education began in the home where the intellect of young minds could be cultivated.

The school curriculum at Naparima was scrutinized for its efficacy of providing a practical education for boys in an agricultural colony and that of a classical education that gave attention to the arts. In 1915, Governor Norman Lamont welcomed the progress of Naparima College which took a keen interest in agriculture and handicraft, and congratulated the Canadian missionaries for placing an education within the reach of a people that would

[113] *Ibid.* October 1915, 19, 'News of the Churches'.
[114] *Ibid.* 20

serve them for the battle in life.[115] Lamont's remarks reinforced the rationale that East Indian students only belonged in the agriculture sector. In his report in 1915, Principal Reverend C.T. Baillie of Naparima College, alluded to a conflict that arose in the prescribed Naparima curriculum. Baillie did not want Naparima to be an agricultural college; he felt that although the school was in an agricultural district, English, History, Algebra, and General Science would prepare the boys for a society that was rapidly changing. It would awaken an interest to the scientific side of agriculture, as opposed to dictation on the exact knowledge of scientific processes. [116] Despite the advances in education East Indians had gained in education through the missionaries, Naparima had to remain within the framework of a Crown Colony that demanded expertise in agriculture for its economic survival. Baillie's and Lamont's statements demonstrate that pressure was being put on educational officers in Trinidad to ensure that higher education would grant more opportunities for boys to gain social mobility. It further indicates that with the progress of higher education, British officials risked losing their steady supply of labour in the agricultural sector, which was a potential threat to the socio-economic hierarchy of Trinidad.

XIV. Cambridge Examinations and Island Scholarships

As an affiliated school of Queen's Royal College, boys attending Naparima College were given opportunities to write the Cambridge Junior and Senior Cambridge Examinations. Here they would have the ability to earn an Island scholarship that would take them to universities in Canada, America, Great Britain, most notably to Cambridge and Oxford. Every year, three Island scholarships were offered to students who achieved the highest marks in the Cambridge Examinations. Each scholarship was worth £600 and would fund a student for three to five years. In 1863, Trinidad became the first island to offer Cambridge

[115] *Ibid*. 23, 'Principal's Report'. Article reprinted from *The Mirror*
[116] *Ibid*. 'Principal's Report', 7, Article reprinted from *Port of Spain Gazette'*

Examinations.[117] It was a benevolent gesture that strengthened the relationship between metropole and colony. Early winners of the Island scholarship were white sons of officials and planters in Trinidad who attended Queen's Royal College and St. Mary's, and who were expected to receive 'Western Education' to become professionals in Medicine, Law or Engineering. By contrast, the annual report for 1914 indicated that the Director of Agriculture offered an Indian a trial position on the government farm. This student was a graduate of Queen's Royal College who studied agriculture at the laboratory and passed the Cambridge Local Examination in agriculture.

For Afro-Trinidadians who attended secondary schools in Port of Spain, the Island scholarship meant that they could compete with white boys and demonstrate their intellectual capabilities at an English university. Campbell notes that the "creoles would prove their worth and stronger links between scattered parts of the Empire would be forged."[118] The most famous Afro-Trinidadian to win an Island Scholarship was Eric Williams who later became the leader of the People's National Movement (P.N.M.) and the country's first Prime Minister. He spearheaded the momentum for Trinidad's independence from the Empire. In his autobiography *Inward Hunger*, Williams wrote about attending Queen's Royal College and winning an Island scholarship in October 1931 that gained him entry into Oxford University: "The intellectual equipment with which I was endowed by the Trinidad school system had two principal characteristics-quantitatively, it was rich; qualitatively, it was British. 'Be British' ". [119] While at Oxford he had a brush with the colonial mentality where students were surprised that people in Trinidad knew English. Later on, Williams' first P.N.M. cabinet comprised of such "scholarship boys" that included his deputy political leader Dr. Patrick Solomon, (MD), Dr. Winston Mahabir, an East Indian physician, and Ellis Clark a constitutional lawyer who was a prominent member of the Roman Catholic Church and who

[117] A.J Stockwell, 'Examinations and the Empire: the Cambridge Certificate' in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Making Imperial Mentalities Socialization and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1990), 204.
[118] Carl Campbell, *Colony and Nation*, 27.
[119] Eric Williams, *Inward Hunger (*London, 1969), 33.

also became Trinidad's first ambassador to the United Nations.[120] Cambridge examinations not only provided a gateway to higher education, but also started a new development between colonies such as Trinidad and the British Empire. As inhabitants of Crown colony possession of the British Empire, both Afro-Trinidadian and Indians occupied the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder that was upheld by both economic policy and notions of racial inferiority. However, access to education to institutions especially those in England challenged these assumptions. The same rationale for East Indian boys from Naparima would ring true as the fledgling San Fernando school would challenge established schools in Port of Spain.

In 1901, boys from Naparima College sat the Cambridge examinations for the first time. Although no students won an Island scholarship, Naparima became a noted competitor for island examinations. The College competed in Class IV in ten different subjects, in six of which Naparima came out first. In Class V, the subjects were seven, in five of which Naparima College stood first doing particularly well in other subjects. For the examination held in December 1902, Naparima College entered up to forty pupils and gained the lead in the third class securing better results than the other colleges in 50 percent of the subjects. However, in the percentages of marks gained in the IV, V and VI classes, there was a noticeable regression in the examination of the previous year.[121] By 1912, the names of about fifty boys were submitted for the annual Cambridge Examinations in which special Saturday classes were held by Headmaster Dr Coffin; who realized the opportunities being afforded by Island scholarships.[122] In 1915, fifty- two boys sat the Cambridge exams, and a student named Samsoonder stood the highest in the colony. Other noteworthy students included G.E. Bonus in Form III, his average being 70 %. In Spanish Translation, he gained 82%; Dyall of Form II made 86%t in the same subject, and Juggernauth of the same Form, gained 85%. In

[120] Ivaar Oxaal, *Black intellectuals come to Power* (Massachusetts, 1968), 59-60.
[121] Governor Maloney to Chamberlain. Naparima College, 1903 CO 295/499 T.N.A/U.K.
[122] *Trinidad Presbyterian*, January 1912, 7, 'News of the Churches'.

Form I Arithmetic, W.H. Date made 90 per cent, and Wilson 87 per cent. In the Preparatory Form, Maloney made 95 per cent in English.[123] This effectively proves the huge strides these students were making in the educational field.

Prize-giving ceremonies were public displays that honored students who had achieved high marks in the Cambridge examinations. Governors, principals, teachers and elite business -owning families were invited to give speeches or to make handsome contributions to academia. These annual celebrations served as a platform for East Indian youth to emerge into colonial society as well-educated citizens of the colony. In 1903, both the *Port of Spain Gazette* and the *Mirror* (then leading newspapers) ran editorials on the success of Naparima College and the prize- giving ceremonies at Oriental Hall. Governor Alfred Maloney of Trinidad, Mr. Gervase Bushe and Charles M. Pasea, as well as the Principal of Naparima College were among the guests of honour at the ceremony. Over the back wall of the stage in Oriental Hall stood the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes, while between these and lower down were the British Royal Standard. Hung around these flags was a mass of red, white and blue bunting festoons. This scene marked the Empire's stronghold over Trinidad, and as students walked across the stage in front of British officials and Canadian teachers, it symbolized the Christian paternalism that both Britain and Canada showed towards East Indian youth.

Book prizes culturally tied East Indian youth to the British Empire. Titles of these books suggest that they contained knowledge about the culture of the Empire and its territories as well as its officers and the officials who maintained control in these areas. Names of East Indian boys who attended Naparima College and their prizes were given editorial spaces in various newspapers and serials. The publication of these results was synonymous with the success of the school. The names included:

[123] *Ibid*. September 1915, 9 'Report of the Headmaster at Naparima College'.

Class III. John. L Armoogan First Aggregate, Prize: *Macaulay's Essays*
Class III.Conald Acham, Prize: *Stories from Classical Literature*,
Class III. Cyril Fitzpatrick, Prize: *Indian after the Mutiny*
Class V: Charles Soodeen; Prize: *Tales of African Travel*
Class V: Stephen Namsoo: Prize *Life of T.E.Lawrence*
Class V: Benjamim Roodal: Prize: *Daily Life during the Mutiny*[124]

The intellect of a new generation was being culturally shaped by colonial officials representing the British Empire and the missionaries from Canada both of whom had a vested interest in integrating East Indians into Trinidad society. Governor Maloney stated:

> Twenty five years ago nothing was known here of the Canadian Indian Mission but now they had submitted substantial claims on the Government. They were contributors to the Exchequer of the Colony in this way that the Indians trained under them did not return to India and thus saved large sums that would otherwise be expended in return passages. From time to time they came to the land they were warmly received by planters, merchants and proprietors and were soon recognized by the Government and from that time their influence had grown until it was what it was today.[125]

Canadian missionaries challenged the notion that East Indians were just meant for manual labour by elevating the standing of Naparima College amongst competitors such as Queens Royal College and St. Mary's. For example, Grant used the prize-giving ceremony to collect donations for the School. He specifically asked that money be given for a laboratory to a deliver a course in Chemistry by Professor Carmody in Port of Spain which would allow students to write the Cambridge exam in Chemistry. He also asked that students be given a free pass to visit the Government Railway to Port of Spain, so that they could become acquainted with engineering. The potential for East Indians to attain social mobility was contested between the economic need of the British for East Indians to remain on the island and the missionaries' continuing proselytizing efforts. East Indian academic achievement transformed these forces in that East Indians were moving off the land and challenging the

[124] Governor Maloney to Chamberlain. Distribution of Prizes. St. Mary's College, Queen's Royal College, and Naparima College. Newspaper Clippings from the *Mirror*, 1903. C.O 295/419. TNA/UK.
[125] Naparima College Press Clippings *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1903 C.O 295/419. TNA/UK

notion that they needed to be saved from Hinduism and Islam that was inherent to the belief that Canadian missionaries who were bestowing the gift of education.

X. East Indians Abroad

Monthly serials like the *Trinidad Presbyterian*(1904-1937); *East Indian Herald* (1919); *East Indian Patriot*,(1923-1925); *East Indian Weekly* (1928-1932) and the *East Indian Advocate* (1934), devoted space in their monthly publications to East Indians who did well in the Cambridge Exams and who went abroad to universities after winning Island scholarships. Students who won these prizes entered into fields such as Law, Medicine and Engineering. These serials memorialized the hard work of the Canadian Presbyterians who dedicated their lives to uplifting the statuses of East Indian children for providing avenues for education. In 1904, Frank Mahabir sat the Cambridge Senior Certificate, and was one of three graduates to win the Island Scholarship. He went to New York and Edinburgh to receive medical training and finally returned to Trinidad as a member of the central executive Presbytery and the College Board.[126] In 1915 the *Trinidad Presbyterian* ran a story that Jacob Laltoo, son of Reverend Mr. Laltoo, was going off to Edinburgh University to study medicine after winning an Island Scholarship, after which he intended to come back to Trinidad. The Presbyterian schools were praised for their efforts, as was the patriotism of his parents for having a son who was loyal to the Empire in tendering his services to the British government when he returned to Trinidad.[127] In 1920, the *East Indian Herald* also profiled several students who went abroad. With the advent of a pseudo- print culture that can be seen in these serials, names of East Indian students who did well in exams would connect different East Indian communities in the island. Some of these students included Mr. Ramjohn, who was the son of a business proprietor on Coffee Street in San Fernando who studied at Naparima where he passed the Junior Cambridge Exam and won a scholarship to Canada and

[126] Stephenson, *East Meets West*, 65.
[127] *Trinidad Presbyterian,* September 1915, 10 'News of the Churches'.

entered McGill University to study medicine. Mr. Simon Goberdhan of Fyzabad estate also won a scholarship to study engineering in America, and also there was Mr. Ramsaroop, a graduate of Naparima College who also went to America to study medicine. [128]Lastly we may note that in 1934, Jules Mahabir was honoured in the *East Indian Advocate*; as a successful graduate of Naparima College, after spending some time on his father's cocoa estate, he left for London in 1913 to study law at Gray's Inn. After his studies, he came back to Trinidad and became the first appointed magistrate of the colony.[129] East Indian children who went abroad would become prominent teachers, lawyers and medical professionals on the island; as well, they would have dual identities as prominent leaders in times of political upheaval.

George Fitzpatrick (who became a barrister) and Francis Evelyn Mohamed Hosein were successful products of Naparima College. As a graduate of the school, Hosein went to Queen's Royal College and then became a barrister at Lincoln's Inn in England. Both of these gentlemen are significant because they were given the opportunity to offer evidence to the 1910 Commission (also known as the Sanderson report), about the conditions of free and indentured Indians living in the colony. Fitzpatrick and Hosein, who formed pioneer East Indian organizations in Trinidad, would become significant players during times of constitutional debate and political agitation in Trinidad. In many ways, John Morton never fully appreciated the unintended consequence: from the seizure of children from the suffocating traditions of their parents' homes that led to the creation of Naparima College, there would emerge an entire Indian middle class.

X. Public Activities

The strength of the Canadian Mission in Trinidad also rested with Morton's public activities. His concern with the spiritual well-being of Indians in Trinidad coalesced with the

[128] *The East Indian Herald,* (E.I.H). December, 1919, 11, 'Education'. See Kris Rampersad for other examples of East Indians going abroad in his *Finding a Place: Indo-Caribbean Literature* (Kingston, 2003).
[129] *The East Indian Advocate,* March-April 1934, 5, 'Who's who in the East Indian Community'.

importance of settling Indians on the island. Morton's testimonies during the 1884 Muhurram disturbances and his evidence given at the 1897 West Indian Royal Commission revealed his vision how the contours of how a distinct East Indian community should be shaped. It is important to note that these particular activities of Morton did not feature Sarah Morton's tribute to her husband. In his statements to Henry Norman regarding the Massacre during the Muhurram festival, Morton agreed that the measures taken by the colonial government to fire on the crowd of revellers was appropriate. It was, he claimed "absolutely necessary". His endorsement for the level of violence levied at the East Indian participants stemmed from the notion that by their large gathering, they were becoming conscious of their strength and were becoming prone to lawlessness. The festive atmosphere of Muhurram, he continued, caused the participants to flout the rules and disregard the explicit instructions prescribed by the administration to not proceed into San Fernando. Since the shooting, Morton remarked that the demeanour of the "Coolies had changed" and that in time participation in the festival would die out altogether.[130] Morton's public statements reveal the degree to which he advocated for the full assimilation of East Indians into a Christian framework under the auspices of the colonial government. As Muhurram was a Muslim celebration, and one that was also enjoyed by Hindus, the celebration contradicted Christian principles. The festival went against the goals of the missionaries to improve the Indian character by means of rooting out the rich ancestry of Hindu and Muslim traditions. Moreover, he accused Afro-Trinidadians (Creoles) of enticing East Indians to carry on with the Muhurram celebration thereby causing disorder and recklessness. Afro-Trinidadian students who attended Presbyterian schools, were dismissed and treated as secondary characters by missionaries. It is interesting that a year before the "Hosay", Morton had

[130] BPP.1885, LII, (*Correspondence respecting the Recent Coolie Disturbances in Trinidad at the Mohurram Festival*, Reverend Morton testimony), p.68.

employed an Afro-Trinidadian teacher at Esperanza School named Thomas Gordon[131]who was fluent in Hindustani and showed great interest in his work.

In his thirtieth year of mission work in Trinidad, Morton gave evidence to the 1897 West Indian Royal Commission that assessed the sugar cane industry in the West Indies. He advocated for the opening up of Crown lands so that East Indians could engage in private industries. Savannah land for example, could be used for rice plantations. By using the examples of small cane farmers in Princes Town, Morton advocated for better roads and tramway links so that Indians would be able to transport their goods and have better access to markets.[132] But in his recommendations for maintaining Indians as permanent settlers, and like the authorities who dismissed the efforts of Afro-Trinidadian workers, Morton followed suit by accusing Afro-Trinidadians as unstable workers who detested estate work.

XI. Conclusion

The strength of the Canadian missionaries was their finesse at weaving together religion and education. Through their efforts to gain funding for their missions and schools by collaborating with colonial officials and planters, they had the legal as well as the moral backing to sustain their project of socializing East Indian children to Trinidadian society. On one level, Christianity served the civilizing mission and was a means of 'improving' the Indian children by drawing them away from the faiths of their parents. Traditions that hampered a child's ability to become an obedient productive citizen had to be rooted out for the mission to survive. With the exponential growth in the number of school-houses that the Presbyterian mission built on the island, education marked a transition period from one Indian generation to the next thus creating an East Indian identity in Trinidad. Access to education transformed the traditional roles in East Indian families, as young girls and boys

[131] *The Presbyterian Record*, April,1883, 99, 'Our Trinidad Mission Report by Rev. Thomas Christie' S.M.C. Binder 3. P.C.C.
[132]BPP. 1885, LII, (*Correspondence respecting the Recent Coolie Disturbances in Trinidad at the Mohurram Festival*, Reverend Morton testimony), p. 297.

were now attending school and spending time away from plantations. However, this process was met with skepticism and facilitated resistance amongst East Indians who were determined to move into sectors other than agriculture. This resistance was seen both in mission journals, and the prescribed curricula that concentrated on agriculture. As East Indians moved away from plantation life, colonial officials grew uneasy because education ruptured the steady supply of labour. As the move from India entailed a promise to escape harsh economic circumstances, East Indians who benefitted from secondary education in places such as Naparima were embarking on another diasporic enterprise as they travelled to North America and Europe to become leading professionals. Indeed, Morton and his native mission staff were modifying the status of Indians whether free or unfree by means of education.

However on another level, Morton, like, other invested parties who advocated the indentured scheme continued the pattern of praising the Indian who rescued Trinidad's plantations from ruin. Although the Presbyterian mission had spread its tentacles all over the island, it reinforced a world where the presence of the Afro-Trinidadian was nonexistent or worse, a source of trouble, indicative of his seeming unwillingness to work on the plantations. It is with an understanding of these two levels that will frame the way East Indian leaders sought to represent the needs their communities throughout the remainder of this thesis. As much as the Presbyterians and their converts sought to include Indians in Trinidad, the process of exclusion must also be given attention.

Chapter 3

The 'Creole Indian'

Constitutional Reform and Limited Franchise 1897-1923

I. Introduction

In 1917, the year in which Indian indentureship was terminated, F. C. Marriot, Protector of Immigrants, noted the participation of Indians in a number of strikes on various estates. He drew attention to one episode in which "work was interrupted somewhat for a couple of days by a free fight that was the result of a long feud between the Calcutta men and the Creole-born Indians. The matter was eventually settled by the removal of the ring leaders. On this particular estate, several minor disturbances took place where the men of one or two ships tried to call attention to some real or imaginary grievance by refusing to turn out to work."[1]

Mariot's poignant yet informal use of the term "Creole" brings into sharp focus the process by which colonial officials were making distinctions between Indians who had settled in Trinidad and fresh recruits from India. The category of the "Creole Indian" came into existence when certificates of exemption were distrbibuted. Sections 143-144 of the 1897 Immigration Ordinance were tools to keep track of those Indians who had finished their time of indenture. Every manager of a plantation was bound to enter into a book the name and description of every immigrant not under indenture. [2] In practice, employers were afraid of employing "creole Indians"[3] as they preferred the reliability of indentured Indians. Moreover, with the availability of Crown land and kinship networks, the overall apparatus to maintain the indentured scheme was flawed as colonial authorities could not retain a firm hold on the activities of these Indian labourers known as "Creole Indians."

[1] *Trinidad Immigration Report for 1917.* 1918 Dept. C&I. Emigration Branch. Part B. Proceedings 12-14. G.O.I./ /N.A.I. and see Trinidad and Tobago also Council Paper No. 72 1918. N.A.T.T.
[2] 1897 Immigration Ordinance. C.O. 297/15.T.N.A./U.K.
[3] Governor Hubert Jerningham to Joseph Chamberlain. December, 1897. C.O. 295/382. T.N.A./U.K.

The emergence of the term "Creole Indian", as seen in archival sources dating from 1897, 1917, and later in 1919, makes one pause to examine how the discursive practice of making visible the presence of Indians who were mostly settling in Trinidad entered into the consciousness of the official mind of administrators. On a national scale, the term "Creole Indian" occurs at the same time as the system of indentureship was approaching its twilight, and when Trinidad's black Creole masses were exerting pressure by means of strikes to clamour for more political representation.

In 1917, only 671 new immigrants arrived in Trinidad.[4] The Indian population in Trinidad was composed of groups of Indians who had arrived at different points in the indentured scheme: those who had become peasant proprietors, those who were born on the island and had become educated by missionaries or those who had gone abroad. This was a system that was regulated by a 200 section Ordinance that had undergone numerous changes to fit the needs of a fallen plantocracy. The Immigration Ordinance outlined the lives of new, and, to an extent, settled Indian immigrants in terms of arrivals, alottments, dwellings, rations, hospital care, wages, leave and desertion, marriage and divorce, certificates of exemption, passports and return passages. All of these areas were managed by the Protector of Immigrants who, with a team of wardens, estate managers and emigration agents in India administered this particular labour scheme. The legal apparatus of protection that was modified by the haphazard nature of the sugar industry, and which forced Afro-Trinidadians out of agricultural industries, was slowly collapsing.

Selwyn Ryan argues that the ending of indentured emigration in 1917 "had forced the Indians to come to terms with the society which they had chosen to adopt, and for the first time they were becoming articulate and taking a stand on public issues in an instrumental

[4] *Ibid.*

fashion." [5] However, one may ask: What did it mean, to come to terms? And, how was this articulated? A more nuanced approach must take into account the mutable categories of Indian and East Indian. The constant flip-flopping of these terms is where the term "Creole Indian" emerges. Knowing this will enable a fuller understanding of how the leadership of East Indians and their respective organizations was formed both during and after the indentureship period.

1917 marked the end of indentureship in Trinidad. It was a triumph to Indian nationalists on the subcontinent who deemed Indian migration to various colonies as a form of slavery; however, the processes by which Indians became rooted in Trinidad had started long before this date. Ideas of indigeneity and Indians becoming citizens of Trinidad and Tobago had their origins when Indians starting owning land thus foregoing their return passages. These developments that were rooted in the modifications of the indentured scheme helps us to understand the different pathways of resistance East Indians had taken and the rhetoric that was employed by various leaders.

Ryan's statements are limited to elite East Indian organizations that had been formed before indentureship terminated and comprised of Indians who were in non-agricultural professions. However, in the work gangs, in the lodgings where workers lived, and in the streets of rural and urban Trinidad, there were traces of Indian resistance to which a variety of East Indians from various classes contributed. Grasping the various occupational holdings and religious affiliations that were integral to the project of the creation of an "East Indian community" is a crucial first step to an exploration of how East Indians sought representation in Trinidad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the colonial government. Resistance and representation were synonymous; however, this combination was expressed in different, often contentious forms by various leaders.

[5] Selwyn Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago. A study of Decolonization in a multiracial society* (Toronto, 1972), 30.

This chapter will explore how the category of the "Creole Indian" simultaneously reinforced separateness yet produced cooperation amongst East Indians in their relationship with Trinidad's colonial administration and the black Creole masses. Between 1897 and 1923, East Indian social and political culture was being shaped from many directions such as the rise of Indian nationalism, the Russian Revolution, and the political awakening of Trinidad's black working masses who were clamouring for representative government. Superimposed upon these external forces were specific issues facing East Indians, such as responses to the end of indentureship, repatriation, and remedies to labour conditions. These issues characterized the petitions of East Indian leaders for representation in the Crown Colony. Against all these influences and pressures, the Crown attempted to keep control of local political culture by passing the Seditious Publications Ordinance in 1920 and by co-opting members of Trinidad's colonial populace to become official appointees to the Legislative Council. The latter tactic began the process of divide and rule that Crown authorities used to keep control of Trinidad's colonial masses, which became apparent on a political scale. Thus the "Creole Indian" becomes a lens through which to view how Indians/East Indians were responding to various changes in Trinidad's social and political environments.

II. East Indian organizations and return Passages/termination of indentureship

The economic interests of the Indian population no longer focussed on the sugar estates. Upon their departure, many Indians became tradesman, milk-sellers and peasant proprietors.[6] More importantly, many of them had entered into professions such as law, medicine, and teaching, and therefore had no direct experience in agricultural work. Gerard Tikasingh emphasizes that in the late nineteenth century, fewer Indians worked for the sugar estates, the original purpose of their introduction into the island; research indicates the

[6] Gerard Tikasingh. 'The Emerging Political Consciousness among Trinidad Indians in the late 19thC' (University of West Indies History Conference, 1973), 3.

proportion of indentured Indian labourers fell from 38.7percent of the total Indian population to 8.5 percent in 1901.

One of the earliest public petitions submitted by an Indian pressure group was made to the West Indian Royal Commission of 1897 via the office of the Protector of Immigrants. A group of seventy-eight Indians from Princes Town, St. Joseph and Couva and Princestown denounced the evidence given by Mr. Peter Abel and Geoffrey Fenwick that referred to the unrestricted sale of Crown lands to immigrants as a great source of evil; in fact, Abel and Fenwick had suggested that the sale of Crown lands should stop altogether. Petitioners questioned these statements by asking by what parameters Abel and Fenwick could judge the efforts of Indians in Trinidad to be evil. Was it the presence of the rich and flourishing cocoa estates formed with few exceptions from small holdings originally purchased from the Crown by immigrants? Or, was it the existence of a steadily increasing, smiling, sturdy body of hardworking and thrifty peasant proprietors that was made up of chiefly immigrants? Immigrants, who were severely handicapped by the want of good roads, were by their energy and perseverance gradually controlling untamed forests for profitable cultivation. At the same time, they contributed to the island's revenue by producing cheap food for the entire population. The petitioners brought attention to the increase in task work and the reduction of wages that hampered the livelihoods Indians were trying to sustain.[7] In conclusion, all the petitioners agreed that there was a "feeling among our people that composing as we do one-third of the population, we should be more directly represented in Council especially as there are many of our countrymen resident here possessed of sufficient educational and property holdings."[8] The language employed by the petitioners indicates a sense of rootedness and the belief that by virtue of their labour, colonial authorities should have been aware of their contributions. As well, Indians were also aware that the lack of repatriates as well as Indians

[7] BPP. 1898, L, (*Report on the WIRC*. Appendix C, Vol. II, Part IV, Petition of 78 East Indian immigrants to WIRC), p.350.
[8] *Ibid.*

born in Trinidad, contributed to the growth of the East Indian population. The refrain that Indians constituted a significant fraction of Trinidad's population would become a familiar rallying cry for Indians in Trinidad in their campaign to gain more representation in the colony.

The petitions of these ad hoc groups led to more formal organizations. East Indian organizations such as the East Indian National Association (E.I.N.A.) formed in 1897, was modelled after the East Indian Association in London[9] and the East Indian National Congress (E.I.N.C.) was formed in 1909. The aims of each organization were to promote harmony and goodwill, to encourage thrift, sobriety and industry among East Indians and their descendants, and by every legitimate means, take an interest in their welfare, and strengthen the sentiments of loyalty to the British Crown.[10]

It is noteworthy that founders of these organizations incorporated the term "East Indian" when naming their groups. Although "East Indian" was an official colonial term used to differentiate Indians who settled in Trinidad from recent arrivals from India, the appropriation of the term 'East Indian' was a conscious choice made by members to illustrate their status as settlers in a British West Indian colony. This term signified a crossing of both a physical and metaphorical level from India to Trinidad. With regards to the E.I.N.C, Ron Ramdin writes that "Indians in Trinidad were not a homogenous group and the question of their integration into the larger society has historically and predictably brought the early and later political parties and leaders into contention over various issues."[11] Participants in both the EINA and the EINC were either descendants of indentured immigrants or those who had successfully completed their contract. Land, property, wealth and education acquired by East Indians defined the membership in these organizations. These qualities allowed members to pressure the colonial government, so that they could remedy the social and economic ills of

[9] Sahadeo Basdeo, *Labour Organization and Labour Reform in Trinidad 1919-1939 (*Trinidad, 1983), 45.
[10] *The Trinidad Mirror*, "Return Passages", 26 July, 1899. SMC. Binder 5 P.C.C.
[11] Ron Ramdin, *Arising from Bondage* (London, 2000), 291.

East Indian communities. The qualifications of these members reaffirmed the positive indicators that came with permanent settlement. Members of the organizations were merchants, businessmen, lawyers, doctors, and proprietors. Individuals in these professions also had dual roles of being leaders in Christian, Hindu and Muslim organizations. However, while individuals allied themselves with respective religious enclaves, the combined efforts of the E.I.N.A. and E.I.N.C. leaders was devoid of religious communalism.[12] Lastly, according to Tikasingh, the EINA was modelled after a similar association in London and appointed an ex-M.P for Finsbury named Dadabhoi Naoroji as an honorary member.[13] This affiliation is noteworthy because Naoroji had co-founded the Indian National Congress (INC) and had participated in debates on the termination of indentureship.[14]Also, by having Naoroji as a figurehead of this organization, one can begin to see the reciprocal effects of the anti-indentureship debates. Previously, the plight of Indians overseas under the indentureship scheme had proved to be a significant cause among Indian nationalists in their aspiration for home rule. Now, East Indians in Trinidad began to affiliate themselves with figureheads or organizations in India who denounced indentureship to carve out a space by which they could agitate for more representation in a society under Crown rule.

An early challenge that the EINA and EINC faced was the question of return passages. This was a key issue because it made it more difficult for Indians to return to their homeland. Trinidad's Immigration Ordinance of 1899 restricted the right to free return passages back to India for those indentured labourers who had recently arrived in the colony.[15] According to an article in the Trinidad *Mirror*, the clause indicating free return passages to India was a key incentive to getting immigrants and keeping a steady supply of

[12] Marianne Ramesar, *Survivors of Another Crossing* (St. Augustine, 1994), 116.
[13] Tikasingh, 'The Emerging Political Consciousness among Trinidad Indians', 30. See Naoroji's statements on the termination of indenture in Interdepartmental Conference G.O.I. on the decision to abolish indenture. February, 1916. C.O. 323/717 T.N.A/U.K.

[15] Lawrence, *A Question of Labour* (New York, 1994), 427.

cheap labour to strengthen Trinidad's agricultural industries. The author stated that "the Indians have no doubt a very strong love for their Asiatic home- a love which is deeply ingrained in them by centuries of tradition. Most Europeans love their country too, but their love has not that basis-call it religious, superstitious or what one will- upon which rests the East Indians affection for fatherland."[16] Although the number of repatriates had steadily decreased, East Indians Trinidad interpreted it as an affront to their traditional rights to maintain ties with their homeland.

The debate over return passages was an attempt by the administration to not only keep future immigrants tied to the colony, but also to challenge the East Indian organizations to think about questions of homeland and their status as citizens of Trinidad within the British Empire. At a meeting of the Agricultural Society in Port of Spain, John Morton, the notable Canadian Presbyterian missionary, agreed with the Ordinance, claiming that the aim of immigration was indeed to make Indians permanent settlers.[17] However, many East Indians disagreed with Morton's statements. They were shocked at the prospect of their right to a return passage, (as enshrined in the Immigration Ordinance), was being taken away. This made the option of returning to India an unlikely prospect.

To resolve this matter, a national Panchyat[18] was held in Tunapuna in a government school building under the auspices of Jugmohan Singh. In India, the Panchyat is an indigenous form of governance that takes place at the village level. It is reserved for high castes such as Brahmins and is made up of a council of five elders who act as mediators to resolve disputes or issues affecting the daily lives of villagers. The Panchyat in the diaspora functioned as a traditional legal body that expanded the idea of the village to promote a sense

[16] *The Trinidad Mirror*, 26 July, 1899, 'Return Passage', SMC Box 5. P.C.C.

[17] J.C Jha, 'East Indian Pressure groups in Trinidad 1897-1921'(Paper presented at University of West Indies, 1973), 6.

[18] Other spellings are Panchite and Panchait

of belonging to those who had migrated.[19] Prior to the Panchyat in Tunapuna, this form of gathering was used to determine leaders of various Hindu Panths. A Panth is a spiritual path determined by the personal experiences in a particular branch of Hinduism. The Ramanund, Kabeer, Owghur and Sewnarain Panths were brought to Trinidad sometimes through Demerara by "Chamars"- the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy. In his diary, Surgeon D.W.D. Comins[20] noted that Kabeer-Panth was introduced by one Meethodoodass, a Chamar who came from India through Demerara in 1880; he who distributed bhaiks[21] to Jogidass and Gobindass who were Chamars, Nowladass of the Chattree caste as well as several others of different castes. After both Methoodass and Gobindass left for India to live in Benares, Jogidass was appointed to the headmanship of the Kabeer Panth and Nowaldass was his secretary. The society worked for several years, and, every full moon, the majority of the members of the society met at a temple (Cuttia) in the ward of Arima. Nowaldass who had more considerable influence over the Indians in his village as he was educated in Hindi, found favour in the sight of high castes viz. Brahmins and Chattrees, called a Panchyat at the Gooderass Temple in St. James village to relieve Jogidass of his position as leader. Members of the Panchyat reasoned that Jogidass could no longer be leader because he was of a lower caste who could not be worshipped by higher castes. Both Meethodass and Gobindass maintained that worshippers should not be excluded from the Kabeer Panth due to caste. All those who wished to join the society were considered equals; however, the money that Nowaldass brought to the Panth gave him considerable leverage to solidify his position as

[19] Sabrina Ramnarine, 'The Panchyat as an Early Form if Conflict Resolution in Trinidad' in Ann-Marie Bissessar and Brinsley Samaroo (eds.), *The Construction of Indo Caribbean Diaspora* (St. Augustine, 2004), 220.

[20] D.W.D.Comins *Note on Immigration to Trinidad*. (Calcutta, 1893), 37. This evidence is part of a memorandum by Mr. Philip Ramkissun, Clerk Irrigation Office, Trinidad. Panth is spelled Phunt. See Brinsley Samaroo, " 'Reconstructing the Identity': "Hindu Organization in Trinidad During their First Century" in Brinsley Samaroo and Ann-Marie Bissessar (eds.), *The Construction of an Indo Caribbean Diaspora* (Trinidad, 2004), 45-62.

[21] Bhaiks were necklaces made up round pieces of wood

leader.[22] This Panchyat demonstrated how the porous nature of caste was being re-ordered along class lines that informed the collective decision making of those who belonged to the Kabeer Panth. The Panchyat provided a forum for those who wished to resolve a tension between those who wished to preserve the religious nature of the Panth in the light of a variety of caste affiliations to be found in Trinidad.

This form of village governance that regulated specific religious duties evolved into a national Panchyat in Trinidad to discuss the ramifications of the 1899 Immigration Ordinance. It functioned as an effective way of promoting the idea of holding public gatherings so that people could discuss the pertinent issues affecting their communities.[23] One of the largest shopkeepers in Tacarigua, Jugmohun Singh took it upon himself to gather the most influential Indians on the island. According to an article in the *Port of Spain Gazette*, over 500 of the most influential East Indian men attended the Panchyat.[24] This Panchyat was not based on caste distinction in the religious aspect; rather, it became an accepted prerequisite for those in business professions to assume leadership roles.

This gathering illustrated the fact that East Indians were now willing to go against John Morton who was considered to be a saviour amongst East Indians because he enabled higher access to education. The Panchyat caused John Morton such distress that his wife Sarah Morton excluded an East Indian Presbyterian woman named Fanny Subran because her husband Geoffrey Subran supported the Panchyat. Fanny was saddened by Sarah Morton's actions in that she remembered how Sarah and "Sahib" [John Morton] had raised her since she was a little girl and taught her how to read and write. Fanny bemoaned the fact that ever since her family was ex-communicated from the Presbyterian community; she feared that her children would not benefit from the kindness or opportunities the church had to offer. She

[22] Comins, *Note on Immigration*, 37.
[23] *Port of Spain Gazette*, 1899, 'Panchite held in Tunapuna, Question of Return Passages' SMC Binder 5.P.C.C.
[24] *Ibid.*

likened herself to the prodigal son who atoned for his sins, but needed to be welcomed back into the fold of the family.[25] The actions of Geoffrey Subran who elected to go against Morton by participating in the Panchyat, illustrates on the personal level that for those East Indians who wished to go against the Presbyterian church- which had a firm hand in creating the East Indian community in Trinidad, now ran the risk of rupturing familial relations.

These divisions and cleavages in the private sphere were exacerbated in the public arena. The Panchyat held in Tunapuna was not welcomed by all East Indians. In fact, several East Indian men who were loyal to John Morton, including the minister Charles Clarence Soodeen, declared that the Panchyat was convened on account of a misleading report circulated a by a few "disaffected young men on the premise that you [John Morton] had attacked the free return passage for all East Indians in Trinidad. The scope of the Panchyat had gone too far, for it attacked the character of the Canadian missionaries and managers of all denomination schools; an action that was unworthy of such as gathering."[26] It is unclear whether the support or negative reactions to the Panchyat came from members of the E.I.N.A. However, it speaks to how individual East Indians took it upon themselves to seek out alternative avenues of representation that were not recognized by the colonial administration. The Panchyat in Tunapuna represents how East Indians 'creolized' traditional forms of Indian culture to carve out their political identity in their new society. It also illustrated how a significant section of East Indians in Trinidad still kept alive the idea that India was their ancestral homeland and were uneasy about letting go of the prospect of returning.

Questions regarding the return passage were brought to the table during the Sanderson Commission. In 1910, Lord Sanderson who was a former Permanent Under Secretary of State

[25] Letters between Fanny Subran and Sarah Morton, Tunapuna Village, 1899. SMC Collection Binder 5. PCC. *Note that this incident did not make it into Sarah Morton's *John Morton of Trinidad: Pioneer Missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies* (Toronto, 1916).

[26] Petition signed by several East Indian men to John Morton, Princestown, 1899. SMC. Binder 5. P.C.C.

at the India office, was called to address the status of Indian emigrants in the colonies. [27] The system of recruitment, low wages, high rates of prosecution for labour offences such as desertion, and the disproportionate ratio between men and women called for the dismantlement of the emigration scheme. As seen in a previous chapter, the ill-treatment of Indian indentured labourers in South Africa had caught the attention of the Indian press and sparked movements in India for indentureship to be terminated. The Colonial Office, India Office and the Government of India thought it prudent to investigate the conditions of Indian indentured servants in the Crown Colonies and stressed that the evidence gathered should reflect the Indian point of view. According to K.O. Lawrence, testimonies from Indian witnesses living in the colonies were to be incorporated in the overall assessment of Indian indentureship.[28] It was here that George Fitzpatrick and F.E.M. Hosein, as leaders of the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. took centre stage when they were questioned on the future of Indian indentureship and return passages. Hosein's father had given up his free return to India, bought his five acres of land and sent Hosein to the Canadian Mission School in Arouca. At the end of his testimony Hosein declared: "I would not consider going back to India, but rather I look on Trinidad as my home, and that I would only go to India as a visitor."[29]

Both Hosein's personal and professional characteristics affirmed the positive attributes of indentureship. Fitzpatrick and Hosein represented a new breed of Indian that was self made. Attributes of this "new Indian" were determined by a decision to forego return passages to India. The combination of their hard work on the plantations or that of their parents, and the education provided by the Canadian missionaries allowed East Indian men entry into the professional classes. These forces enabled men like Hosein to become socialized into the culture of a Crown colony. This contention over return passages gives us a glimpse into some of the dissent amongst East Indians in Trinidad to such an extent that East

[27] Lawrence, *A Question of Labour*, 26.
[28] *Ibid*. 27
[29] *Ibid*. 303

Indians saw themselves as permanent settlers in which their diasporic connection to India was either imagined or still-tangible reality.

Subsequent questions put forth by colonial officers to both Hosein and Fitzpatrick were related to improvements to the emigration scheme. The questions asked to these men suggested how improvements could be made to the indentured scheme so as to make Indians in Trinidad permanent settlers. In Trinidad, the high degree of prosecutions for desertion and suicide were seen as an assault on the rights of Indian citizens who had migrated to the colonies. George Fitzpatrick strongly stated that the Protector of Immigrants did little to seek redress for the abuse Indian labourers had endured at the hands of overseers. He cited a case where four overseers from Hermitage estate beat several indentured workers, including a woman whose pregnancy was terminated on account of the blows she had suffered. As a lawyer, Fitzpatrick was able to take the matter to trial and managed to convict and fine the overseers on a minor charge of assault and battery; the perpetrators were sentenced to three months hard labour.[30] However, he concluded with strong conviction that he was in favour of Indian immigration as it benefitted the colony.

F.E.M Hosein reiterated that Indian immigration was needed in Trinidad because of the economic contributions Indians had made when they settled in the colony. Hosein argued that immigrants were very well treated, but more effort was needed to make the terms of the indentured contract more transparent. Moreover, impetus was needed to instil confidence in immigrants to bring their grievances before immigrant officials. For example, when asked about the level of protection among indentured labourers, he stated: "There are magistrates I presume. But I say you must take into consideration the condition of these people. Some of them are hopelessly ignorant and they would rather nurse their grievance and keep it to

[30] BPP. 1910, XXVII, (*Emigration from India to the Crown Colonies*, Minutes of Evidence of George Fitzpatrick, 16, July 1909), pp.141-42.

themselves than tell it to anyone."[31] Hosein had never been to the depots where newly-arrived immigrants came, and it was only by hearsay that he had learned that laws were not properly communicated to fresh recruits. Furthermore, when pressed on the extent of freedom Indian labourers had in the colony, Hosein replied: "I do not know. I know they are allowed to go about. For instance I know they are allowed to go about work. I know they leave their estates and go marketing every week and sometimes they go miles away from the estate to do their marketing and I suppose they are either given special leave to do that or they can go without."[32]

Hosein's answers revealed a disconnect he had with indentured and time- expired Indians. When asked about the state of emigration in Trinidad, Committee members questioned Hosein on his upbringing, and he testified that at the age of 20, he received the opportunity to study law in England and left Trinidad for seven years. He stated: "I would consider myself an anomaly as compared with the ordinary East Indian. It is the usual custom for East Indians to get their children to work for them. My father did the opposite. He never had any of us work, but sent all of us to school. He was a Muslim and an independent man before he bought his estate. He worked as a common labourer on the sugar and cocoa estates."[33] Both Fitzpatrick and Hosein agreed that indentureship should not be stopped and were subsequently used as examples of success by supporters of the indentureship system. S.H. Fremantle, the Government of India representative, argued that both these East Indian gentlemen were a testament to the sacrifices of parents who had experienced this degrading system. They were born and educated in the colony and had gone to England to study. Both were emphatic in their approval of the indentureship scheme. Fremantle reiterated an incident from a previous commission. He had found Hosein reading an article in the Indian newspaper, the *Statesman* about a class of tenants in the vicinity of Giridih district in

[31] *Ibid.* (Evidence of Mr. Francis Evelyn Mohamed Hosein, 16, July 1909), p. 312.
[32] *Ibid.* 314
[33] *Ibid.* 316

Jharkhand who, in return of a loan of Rs. 20-40 had practically sold themselves into servitude. Hosein affirmed that indentureship offered Indian men and women a chance to escape the suffocating economic conditions in India. Fremantle used this conversation to fire back at Gokhale who threatened to cut away the ladder that indentureship afforded Indians to becoming proprietors of land and self-respecting citizens of Empire.[34]

Evidence from Fitzpatrick and Hosein also illustrated how the shift from the agricultural sectors had created a rift in the experiences of both free and indentured Indians in Trinidad. Hosein observed: "Those who are indentured live on the estate; those who are not indentured usually live off the estate and there is little commerce between the free ones and the indentured ones."[35] His statement contradicts the evidence that there was much communication between these groups, as seen in the previous chapter when free Indians often employed both free indentured immigrants to work on their fields. Perhaps as wealthy free Indians, there was an inherent distance between Fitzpatrick and Hosein and the Indian population in Trinidad (both free and indentured). Both men did not provide the full scope of Indian immigration in the colony, nor could they give recommendations about the administrative flaws of emigration such as recruitment. Hosein and Fitzpatrick claimed to speak for the entire Indian community, but, in reality, they were a privileged minority. The inadequacies of representation that both gentlemen exhibited provides one with a glimpse of the future failures of the E.I.N.C and E.I.N.A in the twentieth century to provide long term solutions for problems affecting East Indians in Trinidad.

[34] Evidence of S.H.Fremantle, G.O.I. Proceedings of the Council of Governor General of India assembled for the purpose of making laws and regulations under the provisions of Indian Council Acts 1861-1909. Indentured labour. 14, March, 1912. I.O.R. L/PJ/6/1208 File 4358. B.L.
[35] *Ibid.*

III. The reform movement and appointments to Legislative Council

In the context of Trinidad's labour problem after emancipation, Eric Williams wrote: "The essence of the Crown colony system is that it disregards the opinions of the governed."[36] Between 1840 and 1890, Britain faced the challenge of how to devise governments for overseas dependencies such as Trinidad. Representative government structures seemed inappropriate because of the political complexity of its plural society. The idea of trusteeship was employed whereby particular problems would be resolved and sorted out; however, in territories such as Trinidad where communities were divided along the lines of "race, creed and even caste, it was difficult to find the few who could justly represent the aspirations and attitudes of the many."[37] The problems of governing had roots dating back when Trinidad was formally annexed by the British in 1802. Previously, Trinidad had been a Spanish colony with a significant Spanish, French and *free coloured* population. Administrative powers rested with the authority of the Spanish Cabildo. Given the tensions between Spanish, French and British powers and the multicultural nature of Trinidad's society, styles of governance were in contention between various parties. These debates centred on who was best to govern Trinidad. D.J. Murray argues that merchants of London connected with Trinidad, believed that the introduction of English civil laws would be an obstacle to the development of the colony. The ability of Trinidad's industries to develop as a sugar island would prove difficult if trading relations with Spain were strained.[38] However, British colonial administrators who were pre-occupied with Trinidad's security, had to placate the needs of British residents who wanted the introduction of English civil law. These men had to invest in mechanisms that would safeguard Trinidad as a British colony. Murray also

[36] Eric Williams, *The History of Trinidad and Tobago* (Port of Spain, 1962), 87.
[37] Fredrick Madden and David Fieldhouse, *Select Documents on the Constitutional History of the British Empire and Commonwealth Vol.5. The Dependent Empire and Ireland: advance and retreat in representative government* (London, 1991), xx.

[38] D.J. Murray *The West Indies and the Development of Colonial Government 1801-1834*. (Oxford, 1965), 70.

argues that British humanitarians such as James Stephen disagreed with planters gaining control in the colony's Legislature which was the body that would serve as the basis for Crown rule. Stephen was connected to William Wilberforce and the abolitionist movement; both men regarded the planters as not having the sufficient character to form the Legislature. Murray writes that Stephen saw Trinidad as "an undeveloped area in which men would seek to cultivate sugar by slave labour and thus stimulate the slave trade. He regarded the vacant land as providing opportunities for free labour."[39] Lastly, Stephen maintained that the Legislature should be composed of men of great respectability, independent of the community in which they lived and precluded from landed property."[40] The conflict between planters and colonial administrators emerged from what styles of rule would be best suited to retain Trinidad as a British colony. These discussions were characterized by decisions regarding how much investment was needed for the developments of particular industries and what type of labour should be used. Central to these arguments, was the nature of their character of those who wanted, or who had significant political power in Trinidad's Crown government.

As a Crown Colony, Trinidad was ruled by a governor who was appointed by the monarch; the Legislative Council was responsible for the administration of the colony. The nomination of unofficial members to the Legislative Council started the process of reform in Trinidad's Crown colony structure whereby inhabitants of Trinidad such as planters, merchants but including Africans and Indians as well, were able to gain representation in the government. The Legislative Council consisted of official members who were the leading officers of the local government and unofficial members who were private citizens nominated by the governor. Unofficial members were drawn from the planter and merchant class and their qualification of acquired wealth supported the notion that only those with a large

[39] *Ibid*.72
[40] *Ibid.* 73

economic stake would have a significant impact on the welfare of the colony. Bridget Brereton writes: "The practice of appointing unofficials to the Legislative Council to represent the large property interest of the community made it inevitable that they would influence the decisions of the local government."[41] This conflict between planters, merchants and colonial authorities emerged from debates on what style of rule Trinidad would have as a British Crown colony. The 'character' of those who were in power was intertwined in discussions regarding the investments to be made in Trinidad's industries and what type of labour was to be utilized.

Reforms to the Legislative Council intensified debates on what roles the governors and members of the Legislative Council should play. The push for unofficial members came from merchants in London who wanted more advocates for the needs of the planter class.[42] As unofficial members, planters would seek to control- and diminish- expenditure and taxation, as taxation was heavier in Trinidad. In addition, planters would have a stronger voice on how labour was managed. Governor Baron Harris felt that in Trinidad there was a great deal of presumption, vanity and little education "amongst the lower classes ... in addition those essential though much absurd ingredients in a representative system such as high birth, great wealth and superiority of intellect from position and cultivation are wanting.[43] Harris' statements on character reveal his anxieties on keeping order in the colony at a time when both Trinidad's black masses were emancipated from slavery and there was a crisis in the production of sugar. Although Harris did make full reference to the recently emancipated slaves as a threat to governance in Trinidad, the colony's white population was

[41] Brereton, *Modern Trinidad* (Oxford, 1981), 139.
[42] *Ibid*.
[43] Governor Baron Harris to Earl Grey December 1846, Clause 116 (a), in Madden and Fieldhouse (eds.), *Select Documents on the Constitutional History of the British Empire and Commonwealth Vol.5 The Dependent Empire and Ireland* (London, 1991), 332. See also H.A. Hill, *Constitutional Change in the British West Indies 1880-1903* (Oxford, 1970), and James Millette, *The Genesis of a Crown Colony*: *Trinidad 1783-1810* (Trinidad, 1970).

in the minority; therefore, governmental bodies in the island were of utmost importance to entrench and enforce British rule.

In 1862, Governor Robert Keate wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, reiterating that the appointment of unofficials was undesirable because it would take away the legislative power of the Governor. Keate wrote: "The decision would transfer power to those who were less fit to be entrusted with it than the Governor."[44] It was deemed that the constitution of Trinidad in the nineteenth century rested on the fact that the inhabitants of the colony were not qualified to pass legislation through representatives. Keate argued that unofficial members could not be trusted to initiate improvements in the colony. While both unofficial members and official members would be entrusted with assessing public opinion, the official member was responsible to the Governor, while the unofficial member was local, sectional and therefore not subject to control. The fear of unofficial members was that they would defeat measures which did not coincide with their own class. Hence, Keate feared that the appointment of unofficials would pave the way for Trinidad's working masses to seek representation that would compromise the power of the Governor of a Crown Colony. Finally, he bolstered his statements on certain improvements made to the colony by saying that the introduction of "Asian labourers to Trinidad originated with the decision of a Governor [Charles Warner] and that the planters were ill educated, merely sojourners limiting their notion of progress to their own time and no concern for the future."[45]Indians and the system of indentureship therefore occupied a strategic place in matters regarding constitutional reform and the legacy of British rule.

In 1888, the West Indian Royal Commission investigated the matter of reform to Trinidad's constitution to allow for the elections of unofficial members. Unofficials would be chosen from educated classes; however, Attorney-General Stephen Gatty dissented from the

[44] The Duke of Newcastle to Governor Robert Keate, 3, September , 1862. *Ibid.* 341
[45] *Ibid.* 342

view that the elections of unofficials who fitted the education qualifications and had knowledge of the colony's business would still not be adequate to represent Trinidad's interests.[46] Gatty regarded Trinidad's heterogeneous population as composed of alien cultures such as Venezuelans, Chinese, Portuguese, Spanish creoles and Negroes who all could be lured with bribery. He specifically cited that that the "Indians were in no way qualified by knowledge and education to form an intelligent judgment on public affairs; they were men of the lowest castes without political intelligence and were not fit as a body to exercise their political privileges."[47] Gatty's statements revealed a pervasive underlying anxiety that the non-white working masses of Trinidad who indeed were becoming educated, threatened the political stability of the colony and challenged British rule.

The question of constitutional reform in Trinidad not only took place amongst high officials in government offices, but also in the literature produced for the local public. In travelogues about the West Indies and Trinidad, reform movements and the fear of "Negro rule" were of key interest. Discussions on the best mode of governance for Trinidad were racialized in ways in which labour and character became intertwined. One famous travelogue was *The English in the West Indies or the Bow of Ulysses* (1888) written by James Anthony Froude (1818-1894), the noted author of *The History of England*, and who later became Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford. In his travels to several islands in the West Indies, Froude paints Trinidad as an idyllic paradise filled with exotic plants and wondrous scenery like that of the Blue Basin Waterfall. In his descriptions of the inhabitants, he notes the usefulness of the coolies and opines that, without them, sugar cultivation would cease altogether. "The coolie comes to work while the Negro does not."[48] Much like the statements of planters who valued the cheap labour of Indians, the Afro-Trinidadian in Froude's work is

[46] *Ibid.*347
[47] *Ibid*. 347
[48] James Froude, *The English in the West Indies or the Bow of Ulysses* (London, 1909), 77.

no longer part of the landscape; he does not contribute to its Eden-like identity. Froude's paternalistic language emphasizes the need for British rule when describing the status of Negroes in Trinidad. He writes that:

> If happiness be the satisfaction of every conscious desire, theirs is a condition which admits of no improvement: were they independent they might quarrel amongst themselves, and the weaker become the bondsmen of the stronger; under the beneficient despotism of the English government which knows no difference of colour and oppression, they can sleep, lounge and laugh away their lives as they please, fearing no danger; but so long as the English rule continues, he may be assured of the same tranquil existence.[49]

Froude's descriptions of Afro-Trinidadians as lazy creatures affirmed his belief that only a beneficent despotism would safeguard the wealth of Trinidad. Already Trinidad resembled the colony of Grenada where a large community of "negro freeholders" with their own homesteads were living off the lands, multiplying in numbers and crowding out the English inhabitants. "If blacks in West Indies were to be kept as British subjects then it was England's duty to govern them."[50] Froude's fear of reform stemmed from the fact that whites in the Caribbean were outnumbered, and that the coloured races of the islands were becoming more bold. In other words, if English rule were to fail and sovereignty be turned over to Trinidad's black masses, the colony would descend into barbarism and be in the hands of subject races who would not know how to manage it. Froude applauded the efforts of Governors in Trinidad like Charles Warner, who was responsible for overseeing the first wave of Indian migrants to Trinidad. He was saddened that men like Warner were a dying breed of servants as men now appointed to key offices in administration did not possess the calibre of character that was needed to govern. Most importantly, English rule would prevent the colony from becoming another "ghastly example" as that of Hayti. [51]

Subsequent narratives of travels in the West Indies following that of Froude's like William Agnew Paton's *Journey Down the Caribbees* (1888); J. H. Collen's *A Guide to*

[49] *Ibid*. 80
[50] *Ibid.* 90-96
[51] *Ibid*. 81

Trinidad (1888)[52] and as late as 1897, James H. Stark's *Guide to Trinidad*. They were all concerned with the future of Trinidad's races in an era of constitutional reform. The presence of Indians could be used as a counterweight to save Trinidad from falling into the hands of Negro rule that would spell degeneracy in the management of Trinidad's natural resources. In his *Guide to Trinidad*, James Stark, extends Froude's observations by arguing that if Indian migration stopped, the labour supply dependent upon the "negroes would return Trinidad to a state of savagery as bad as Hayti. The work of the European comes from his want to maintain rank, position and a desire uphold the family. The negro has none of this. He has no family pride...All this is reversed with the East Indian."[53]For Froude and others, constitutional reform and the claim of political sovereignty revolved around character that was in turn, modified by labour. In a time when the coloured races of the West Indies outnumbered the white minority and were becoming stronger in their desire for more representation, the ability for the British to maintain their rule was reaching a critical point. The presence of the Indian served to counterbalance these forces. This set the precedent for a "divide and rule" mentality among the subject races in Trinidad, which would play a significant factor for both races seeking representation.

Black intellectuals in Trinidad took a keen interest in the question of reform and representation. *Froudacity,* published in 1889 by John Jacob Thomas was a direct response to the claims made in Froude's travelogue. Thomas was a teacher who had learned modern and ancient languages and taught in rural schools all over Trinidad.[54] Upon completing his first book, *Creole Grammar* in 1869, he travelled to London and addressed the meeting of the London Philological society. Thomas made up an increasing cohort of coloured intellectuals

[52] J.H. Collens, who was superintendent of schools of Boy's Model School in Port of Spain, racially ordered Trinidad's coloured masses into how much labour they contributed to the island. He categorized Trinidad's lower classes into:1. Those who will not work; 2. Those who do little no or no work; 3. Those who work regularly. J.H.Collens, *A Guide to Trinidad* (London, 1888), 37.
[53] James H. Stark , *Stark's Guide to Trinidad* (London, 1897), 75-77.
[54] Faith Smith, *Creole Recitations* (London, 2002), x.

who came from the colonies to London to gain expertise and understanding, to exchange ideas and arouse political consciousness in those who suffered in Britain's colonies. Faith Smith situates Thomas' experiences in London to gain a better understanding of Thomas' work against Froude. For Smith, Thomas was a Pan-Africanist who called upon the responsibility of this "transnational citizenry" of black persons with varying degrees of colonial estates and republics to go to the rescue of Africa.[55]

In *Froudacity*, Thomas deplored the evidence of Froude and accused him of discrediting the actions of those who agitated for reform. Thomas wrote: "Have they who have borne the heat and the burden of the day in making the Colonies what they are no right to enjoy the fruits of their labours...The spirit of the times has rendered impossible any further toleration of the arrogance which is based on self-glorification."[56] He directly challenged Froude's rhetoric that cast the contributions of Trinidad's black masses into anonymity. Rather, all labourers in Trinidad whether they were Indian or black had the right to self-representation. To make his point stronger, Thomas contested Froude's hyperbolic phrase "beneficent despotism". He cited several examples of the sheer irony of this phrase against the reality of racism experienced by Trinidad's Barbadian immigrants living in Port of Spain at the hands of the colonial authorities.[57] The most pertinent example was Thomas' reference to the Muharram riots and Arthur Child's decision to open fire on the Indians.[58] Thomas' writing illustrates the shock at the extreme tactics colonial authorities used to maintain order. By citing the Muhurram incident, Thomas did not discriminate against Indians having the right to clamour for self-government. Finally, Thomas' work shows that literature was a potent force of media for Trinidadians, and for subject races living under colonial rule to voice their opinions on matters affecting their livelihoods.

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[55] *Ibid*. 81 and see Bill Scharwz, 'Crossing the Seas' in Bill Schwarz (ed.), *West Indian intellectuals in Britain* (Manchester, 2003), 4.
[56] John Jacob Thomas, *Froudacity or West Indian Fables Explained* (London, 1969), 75.
[57] *Ibid*. 86
[58] *Ibid.* 102

Reform movements were also bolstered by Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidadian lawyer based in London. He convened the first Pan-African Congress in London, and used this group to lobby for more rights of coloured people in the British Empire.[59] Williams' strength lay in his ability to instil racial pride within black workers, something which evoked a sense of duty to pay tribute to their African ancestors, so that they could claim political power. In 1903, the efforts of Walter Mills and Emmanuel Lazare who were members of the TWA created the Rate Payer's Association (R.P.A.) that tackled water rights. Water supply to residential homes in Port of Spain was constantly being shut off as a means of controlling wastage of water. The Director of Public Works, Walsh Wrightson, paid unannounced visits to homes and even thought of introducing new legislation to place water meters inside private homes.[60] R.P.A. members combated this decision by staging a mass demonstration in Port of Spain and burned down part of Trinidad's Red House; this building was not only the centre of colonial administration, but also served as a symbol of British rule. According to one official, they had not seen this type of demonstration since the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica in 1865.[61] The agitation caused by the T.W.A. and the R.P.A. reflected the growing dissatisfaction with the level of representation in Trinidad's government, and the increasing capability of the black working masses to exert pressure on colonial authorities. To quell this outburst of dissatisfaction, the colonial government co-opted the leadership of the demonstrations to be appointed as unofficial members of the Legislative Council. Individuals such as Randolph Rust, Edmund Lazare and David Alcazar were selected by the Crown to be part of the Legislative Council.[62] The decision for colonial officials to make these

[59] Brereton, *Modern Trinidad* (London, 1979), 149.

[60] *Ibid*. See also Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection; Slavery to Garvey and Beyond* (Masaschussets, 1983), and J.R. Hooker, *Henry Sylvester Williams: imperial Pan-Africanist* (London, 1975).
[61] Riot in Trinidad 23 March, 1903. C.O. 884/9 T.N.A./U.K
[62] Bridget Brereton, *Making of Modern Trinidad* (London, 1979).

appointments demonstrated the weaknesses of Crown Colony government; hence the British would have to find new ways to maintain their sense of authority.

Figure 8. Trinidad's Red House after the fire Source: Michael Mahoney "The Trinidad Water Riots" http://blog.nationalarchives.gov.uk/blog/the-trinidad-water-riots-of-1903/ accessed: 3, December, 2013

As a result of the water riots, Cyrus Prudhomme David became the first black man to be unofficially appointed to the Legislative Council. He, like Thomas, went to England after attending Queen's Royal College, and won an Island scholarship to study law at Gray's Inn.[63] David, along with Stephen Laurence, David Alcazar, and the Grenadian J. Sidney Bourg,[64] advocated for an elected Legislature based on popular suffrage, so that the interests of all Trinidadians would be represented. Official members deplored this movement, because it challenged the principle of rule by propertied elites and it also stimulated demands of the working class which threatened the ability of the colonial government to keep a firm hand on Trinidad.

[63] Brinsley Samaroo, 'Cyrus Prudhomme David. A Case study in the Emergence of the Black Man in Trinidad Politics', *Journal of Caribbean History*, 3 (1971), 76.

[64] *Ibid.*

Discussions about the system of indentureship played a strategic role in these debates. Firstly, during the Royal Commission of 1897, Henry A. Alcazar pointed out that friends of Indian immigration, most notably the planter class, congratulated themselves on the failure of the elective principle.[65] If a franchise were to be extended, the planters would lose on the argument that more indentured labour was needed. Alcazar concluded that the relief planters exposed the selfish interests of this class and that the country was against the indentureship scheme entirely. As well, Cyrus Prudhomme David did not agree with sugar and cocoa manufacturers that Indian labour was required to maintain the industries. According to Brinsley Samaroo, David argued that "good harvests in India were encouraging Indians to stay at home and that new recruitment of suitable agricultural labour was needed."[66] His arguments illustrate how the need for labour in Trinidad planted the seeds of discontent between African and Indian labourers both of whom aspired to self- representation in the colony. From both Alcazar's statements and subsequent debates on the indentured scheme, the presence of the Indian was not only a matter of labour, but was also directly linked to the quest for political suffrage in the colony. This in turn would foster both unity and contention amongst Trinidad's East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian subjects in the quest for self-government.

Correspondence from the Colonial and India Office as well as the administrative offices in India suggests that members of East Indians elite associations such as the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. in Trinidad were strategically co-opted into alleviating Indian nationalism and potential conflict from the African populace. Appointments of East Indians to Trinidad's Legislative Council are of interest because they illustrate how the Colonial government utilized the responses of East Indians in moments of upheaval to retain their degree of control. Having an East Indian in government would offset any pressure being exerted by

[65] BPP.1898, L (*Report on WIRC*, Appendix C Vol. II, Part IV, Henry A. Alcazar), p.285.
[66] Brinsley Samaroo, 'Cyrus Prudhomme David,' 82.

Trinidad's black working classes. In 1910, Fitzpatrick was nominated as an unofficial member to the Legislative Council. The appointment of an educated East Indian was welcomed; however, the colonial authorities were anxious that the T.W.A. would resist Fitzpatrick's presence and accentuate "race feeling,"[67] for already there was David Alcazar, a man of colour, who had been nominated to the Legislative Council. In a private note to Lord Crewe from Col. Seely in the Colonial Office regarding Fitzpatrick, Seely stated: "What we don't want is a puppet whose strings will be pulled from outside the colony".[68] In the final assessment, Governor LeHunte of Trinidad deemed that the suitable nature of Fitzpatrick's appointment would strengthen the loyalty among East Indians for His Majesty's government.[69] The decision to place him on the Legislative Council gives one a sense of the complex set of relations East Indian leaders found themselves in when seeking to represent the interests of their communities. In this moment, the presence of the Indian in Trinidad's colonial government modified the power dynamics at work between planters, colonial administrators and the coloured masses in Trinidad society, all of whom were vying for political and economic power in the island.

The rationale behind the nomination of an East Indian to the Legislative Council also had its antecedents during the debates on the merits of indentureship. In 1912, Fitzpatrick was selected as an official member of the Legislative Council by the colonial authorities in Trinidad as a result of his statements before the Sanderson Committee. Fitzpatrick's presence on the Legislative Council would appease sentiments of resentment Indian nationalists had for the indentureship scheme. His evidence justified claims that the East Indians in Trinidad should be allowed official representation on the Legislative Council in addition to the Protector of Immigrants.[70] R.E. Enthoven of the Government of India remarked that

[67] Fiddes to Grindle, Under Secretary State for Colonies, 1910. C.O. 295/463 T.N.A/U.K.
[68] Minute Colonel Seely to Lord Crewe C.O. 1910. C.O. 295/463 T.N.A/U.K.
[69] Governor George LeHunte, Trinidad to Secretary State for Colonies. 1910. C.O. 205/463. T.N.A./U.K
[70] H.J. Read to I.O. Under Secretary of State. November 8th, 1912 I.O.R. L/PJ/1204. File 76. B.L.

Fitzpatrick's name was rather "curious as it did not suggest India origin."[71] It was prudent that the public be made aware that Fitzpatrick was "son of a man who went to Trinidad as an indentured coolie who eventually became a landed proprietor, and that he was not ashamed of his parentage."[72]Fitzpatrick's nomination would counteract the fervour of Gopal Gokhale's campaign in India to end emigration, as Fitzpatrick's career stood for the success of the indentureship scheme. In a similar vein, Fitzpatrick's appointment to the Legislative Council revealed the changes in identity Indians went through as they elected to remain in Trinidad. Enthoven's use of the word "curious" suggests how Indians were transformed when they went overseas.

Fitzpatrick's appointment demonstrates how creolization at a time of constitutional reform worked on several levels; also, his character and his public career represent the confluence of Indian nationalist history, Afro-Trinidadian resistance and the legacy of Canadian missionaries. These three separate yet connected histories were central to the continuance and decline of British imperial rule in both the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Trinidad and Tobago. The decision of the British government to co-opt Fitzpatrick would prove the benefits of indentureship and counter the arguments of Indian nationalists; it would also represent the crowning achievements of the successful educational facilities established by the Canadian missionaries. Yet Fitzpatrick's entry into Trinidad's elite political society would sadly breed discontent amongst Trinidad's Afro-Trinidadian populace who wished to command the political, social and economic arenas of 'their' colony.

[71] A.C.McWaters to R.E. Enthoven. G.O.I. 12, November, 1912. Dept. C&I, Emigration Branch Part A Proceedings 1-2 File 58. G.O.I./ N.A.I.

[72] *Ibid*.

III. Indian seditionists in Trinidad

At the end of indentureship, the office of the Protector of Immigrants was enshrined in the Immigration Ordinance of 1917. Modifications to Immigration Ordinances that dealt with the maintenance of East Indians nominally entrenched East Indians as having a special status in the colony. Although indentureship stopped future immigration to Trinidad, officials in the Indian Office and the Colonial office agreed that updates should be given about the conditions of Indians to counteract any dissatisfaction amongst Indian nationalists who would continue to use the plight of Indians in other territories to fuel their own cause for Home Rule. The duties of the Protector of Immigrants did not change. He was still responsible for producing Annual reports on the conditions of East Indians, and acted as the liaison between the East Indian peasant workers in agricultural districts and the colonial government. He was responsible for entering plantations, keeping records of Indian emigrants and acting as an advocate for East Indians if infractions against the law were committed.[73] Key indicators for satisfactory conditions of East Indian settlement included rates of repatriation, marriages, land accumulation, cane produce, education, savings accumulated by Indian settlers, the political status of East Indians and the ratio between East Indians and Africans on sugar plantations.[74] For example between 1921-1930, over 100,00 acres of land was dedicated to the cultivation of cocoa, canes, rice, corn provisions, coffee, coconuts fruits, peas, limes and mixed cultivation.[75]

Although East Indians received a degree of representation in Trinidad, members of the EINA and the EINC shared the experiences of the majority of East Indians who were either time- expired or indentured labourers. Both before the termination of indentureship and

[73] Trinidad Immigration Ordinance, 1918. C.O. 297/20. T.N.A./U.K.

[74] In the Annual Reports the term "African" not used rather West Indian

[75] Statistics combined from the Annual Reports Protector of Immigrants 1921-1930 Trinidad and Tobago. I.O.R L/PJ/7/1283. B.L.

after, petitions from organizations and individuals who did not fully participate in the E.I.N.A. or the E.I.N.C. revealed that many East Indian peasants were destitute and desperately wanted to be repatriated to India. For example, in 1916 an ad hoc association that set up headquarters on 66 Charlotte Street in Port of Spain, corresponded with the Stranger's Home for Asiatics located on West India Dock Road with hope that their letters would be passed to the West India Committee in London. These letters were written and signed by Jagundum, a casual labourer and his compatriots who vilified the system of indentureship and the ill-treatment of Indian labourers in Trinidad. Jagundum wrote:

> We trust and implore that after a serious and careful mediation you will show us compassion and take us into your kind consideration. We are in great distress and frankly speaking are no better that more destitute. We have to undergo and bear most patiently sufferings in a foreign land far from our native shores. We are grieved to learn that we have nobody to comfort us in our awful miseries. We are barely able to eke out our very existence and the majority of us are on the verge of starvation. We plead for the sake of humanity and in the name of the Almighty One do grant us our one sole desire. It is simply this[:] we are most anxious of returning to our home to our native land and most humbly beg you on bended knee to listen to our pleadings of distress and grant us destitute free return passages to India. [76]

His action showed that Indians were creating networks outside the purview of the Legislative Council to seek reparation. Moreover, Jagundum's supplication to the West India Committee appealed to a Christian sense of justice. His choice of words revealed that he operated within the Christian culture of the colony; he used a common bond of Christianity between his group and those Christians in London who would hear his cries to aid distressed and homesick Indians in Trinidad.

The East Indian Destitute League (E.I.D.L.) was another organization that sought to aid disconsolate East Indians; the activities of this group spanned both before and after the termination of indentureship. The headquarters for the EIDL were also on 66 Charlotte Street, and its leader was Mohammed Orfy who was a Muslim and merchant in Trinidad. Like Jagundum, Orfy was dedicated to helping destitute Indians repatriate back to India. His

[76] Jagundum, Port of Spain to West India Committee, London. 1914 C.O. 295/510.T.N.A/U.K.

activities were deemed seditious by the colonial administration as the operations were considered to be a means of fueling discontent and unrest among the people. Colonial officials were acutely aware of Orfy's dealings because they took place during Indian nationalist debates on indentureship that threatened the colony's supply of cheap labour. Inspector H. D. Passe of Port of Spain wrote that Orfy "when not so employed, he patrolled the streets getting into conversations with East Indians and apparently brewing discontent in their minds."[77] Orfy was born in Kent in England, but his parents were natives of Baluchistan.[78] He was not an indentured labourer; it was reported that he led a sea fearing life and that in 1914, he had arrived in Trinidad from Demerara.[79] Upon his arrival in Trinidad, he immediately associated himself with the EINC, and lived with Abdul Aziz in Princes Town. He was watched and warned against creating any discontent amongst the East Indians and eventually left Princes Town for Port of Spain, where he obtained employment for a few hours a day keeping books for Abdul Ghany who lived on Henry Street.[80] Between 1916 and 1918, Orfy's Destitute League sent a flurry of letters to government offices, officials, and civic organizations in Trinidad, England and India to raise awareness of stranded destitute Indians who could not go back to India. These bodies included the Privy Council and Houses of Parliament in England; The United Indian Association; The Immigration Conference Committee; the West India Committee; the Legislative Council in Trinidad; the Anglo- Indian Association; the All Indian Muslim Association; the Imperial Council; The Indian National Congress; the Canada Indian League; the Secretary State for the Colonies; the Under

[77] *Ibid.*
[78] Thomas Perez Formalie San Jose Guirie, Venezuela to Mr. Darnley C.O. 21, June, 1918. C.O 295/519 T.N.A/U.K.
[79] Port of Spain to Mr. McNaughten, Waterloo House London to C.O. 2, March, 1917. C.O. 295/515 T.N.A./U.K.
[80] Major H.De Passe, Port of Spain to C.O. 4, March, 1917. C.O. 295/516. T.N.A/U.K.

Secretary State for the Colonies; the Secretary of State for India and the T.W.A. in Trinidad.[81]One of Orfy's petitions read:

> Bismallah Al rahman al rahim! We as pure bloods of India and most loyal subjects of King George V of Great Britain and Ireland and Emperor of the British Empire do hereby humbly prey to submit petition of our grievances, and destitute conditions we are labouring under as well as most patiently enduring. We are firm believers of the glorious and honourable saying that 'Britons never shall be slaves' as determined to seek for what are due justice, liberty and peaceful rights, and are strong opponents to what is strictly contrary to the British standard of morality...We are registered as heathens and our offspring as illegitimate births. We fail to understand the reason of such degradation. Muslims as well as Hindus fear the same and Our God as the Christians do.[82]

In other petitions, he urged that the system of indenture be abolished for "indentureship led the healthy sons and daughters of India to become criminals by their frequent comittance of heinous crimes, enforced by the straining yoke of semi slavery at the brutal hands of the officials who abuse the governing power entrusted to them as depraved humanities to be kicked and cuffed on the best pretext and their human frames get physically wrecked through exposures to various causes of ill treatment."[83] Orfy exclaimed that East Indians were exploited for their labour that overseers withheld wages for the free return passages to India after the completion of the five-year contract, and that workers were deprived of food, water, and rest on the estates.

His conscious decision to use the Arabic phrase "Bismallah Al rahman al rahim" which is stated before each *sura* or chapter of the Qur'an as well as his reference to Hindus and Christians, illustrate that his endeavour to abolish indentureship was indeed a holy one. This bears resemblance to Purushottam Das' anti-indentureship pamphlets when he writes that those who opposed the scheme would receive divine *yajna* or blessings. Indentureship broke down not only the physique of the Indian but also their souls. Experience in the colony corrupted the Indian character which could only be restored by going back to India. The multi

[81] Thomas Perez Formalie San Jose Guirie, Venezuela to Mr. Darnley C.O. 21, June, 1918. C.O. 295/519.T.N.A./U.K.

[82] Mohammed Orfy to Privy Concil. 4, September, 1916. C.O 295/508.T.N.A/U.K.
[83] Mohammed Orfy. Port of Spain to Privy Council London. 1918. CO 295/519.T.N.A./U.K

religious identity of the EIDL was transcended by the fact that all its members were equally destitute and wanted to return home. Moreover, each member was unified in the attempt to resist the exploitative measures on the plantation. Lastly, Orfy's petition is steeped in religious symbolism, in which the liberal ideals of British citizenship, justice and equality allowed him to draw attention to the plight of East Indians in Trinidad.

In Trinidad, he was able to hold mass gatherings of East Indians to articulate their grievances. Members of the EIDL mostly consisted of single male East Indians who had resided in the colony between eight and thirty years of age, and who wanted to return to India because of their impoverished situation. [84] Surveillance reports of the Destitute League indicated that Orfy had gathered about fifty East Indians to whom he addressed the subject of immigration, and decried that the government had taken gross advantage of East Indians: "They have shown bad faith in not repatriating you as promised, and that the only way to get the best of the government was to be united."[85] In fact, prior to the departure of an emigrant ship, he was seen talking to unsuccessful East Indians who could not obtain return passages. Colonial authorities were sensitive to his activities as many ships were not available to repatriate East Indians back to India and labourers in Trinidad- both East Indians and Afro-Trinidadians- were feeling the pinch of increased prices in foodstuffs. Subsequently, Orfy was assisted by fellow East Indian and vice president of the League C.B. Mathura, as well as F. E. M. Hosein and Abdul Ghany, who were also under surveillance for seditious activity. News of Orfy's activities spread to Tobago, where he had become acquainted with George F. Samuels who was also noted for inciting unrest.[86] Lastly, Orfy's Destitute League was mentioned in the *Argos* newspaper in which he held discussions about the best process for

[84] E.I.D.L. to Privy Council, London. 1916. These files contain a list of members of the E.I.D.L. that operated on 66 Charlotte street. These lists include the years each member resided in the colony, marital status and number of children, CO 295/508&510. T.N.A/U.K.
[85]Enclosure 2 Minute by Inspector General on the activities of Mohammed Orfy, 1918. C.O. 295/516 T.N.A./U.K
[86] *Ibid.*

repatriating destitute East Indians. Attention given to the League in the *Argos* newspaper was significant because it was one of the first newspapers on the island that provided an expressive outlet for working class consciousness as well as one of the earliest political organs of the T.W.A. [87] The E.I.D.L. was an important organization because it mirrored the underground campaigns in India to abolish the indenture system. In India and in Trinidad, these organizations targeted labourers who had experienced the hardship of indenture, and they used the tenets of British liberty and the language of imperial citizenship to gain freedom from the emigration scheme.

In the administration of Indian immigration to Trinidad, seizure of seditious material preceded the strikes of 1919 and the passing of the Seditious Publications Ordinance. Indian nationalist serials whose anti-colonial sentiments threatened the stability of the Empire were translated and disseminated throughout countries to which Indians migrated. For example, during World War I in both Trinidad and British Guiana, pamphlets from the Ghadar Party were smuggled onto emigration ships with the hope of getting supporters to aid in India's freedom struggle against the British. Subsequently, Indian emigrants who arrived by steamships were searched and questioned as to if they had connections with the Ghadar Party.

The Ghadar Party whose namesake, translates into "mutiny" and "revolt" had its headquarters in San Francisco, California. Its aim was to liberate India from foreign occupation, and it relied on its global outreach and its political connections abroad to strengthen the cause. Maia Ramnath argues that "Ghadar's printed materials and personnel served quite concretely as connective tissue or switching circuit, capable of linking various elements among the Indian radicals abroad, linking radicals to other networks and linking pre-post war revolutionary movements inside the country."[88] In 1914, Junior Inspector of Immigrants H.I. Bowen intercepted excerpts from the *Free Hindusthan*, which was the

[87] Kelvin Singh, *Race and Class Struggles in a Colonial State, Trinidad, 1917-1945* (Calgary, 1994), 16
[88] Maia Ramath, *From Haj to Utopia. How the Ghadar Movement charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to overthrow the Empire.* (California, 2011), 2.

political organ of the Ghadar Party. Translations of this paper were circulated in San Fernando, Princestown and on the estates.[89] Statements from this paper included:

> See how the deceitful and mischievous English Satan has kept the Hindus apart from the Mohammedans and six of the Rajahs. Therefore I am inviting all the Hindus and Mohammedans from all the Colonies and Fiji etc. that now is the time to sweep the English out and get freedom. We must try to revenge the cruel English people. Now is the time to make a mutiny as the whole of Europe is in war. And this is the time to drive away the English from India.[90]

These explosive statements caused much anxiety amongst the colonial administrators working for Indian emigration because they sought to divide the loyalties of Indians abroad during a time of war and impede the desire for emigrants to remain as settlers. The circulation of the *Hindusthan* paper in the colony led to East Indians convening reading circles and debating clubs to discuss matters in India. Individuals such as medical practitioner

[89] H.I. Bown Junior Inspector of Immigrants to Protector of Immigrants, Trinidad Enclosure 1. 9, November 1914. C.O. 295/493 T.N.A/U.K.

[90] *Ibid.*

Figure 9: Indian Seditionists in Trinidad. From Left to right: S.M. Hosein, Moulvi Mohammed Hassan Shah and Yakub Ali. Source: Indian Seditionists in Trinidad, 4, July, 1917 C.O. 295/515 T.N.A./U.K.

Dr. R.N. Sharma who arrived from Demerara, took up residence in Tunapuna; S.M. Hosein, a Moulvite educated in Hindi and Urdu; Moulvi Mohammed Hassan Shah, who came from Gaya, India, travelled to Mauritius and South Africa, made connections with the Ghadar party in San Francisco, California and eventually set up Jumma mosque in San Fernando; Latiff Mohammed, a lawyer's clerk; P.M.H. Allahar, a barrister; Tej Jumul a assistant clerk; G.Adhad, a photographer and Keshwar Raw, a member of the Anglican church held private meetings under the name of "Hindustanee Sanha". These men read extracts from the *Free Hindusthan* paper to awaken the political consciousness of others to revolt against Britain to prove their solidarity with India's struggle for Home Rule.[91] It is interesting to note that Indians who attended these meetings were upper-class professionals, and members of religious groups. East Indians who participated in this circle were marked down as seditionists and their activities were scrutinized by the colonial government. The continuance of Indian emigration depended on a cultivation of loyalty to the Crown government because

[91] Letter to T. McNaughten C.O. 4, July 1917. C.O. 295/515. T.N.A./U.K.

of the benefits it entailed. However, Indian nationalist serials had the potential to awaken the political sensibilities of Indians abroad. As there was a great demand for Indian papers in order to counteract the effects of the Ghadar Party, the Protector of Immigrants in Trinidad would change the effects of the Ghadar party and encouraged the importation of papers that illustrated the benefits British rule had on India. Papers such as the *Janji Akbhar*, *Satja Vavi* and the *Al Hahkitat* were translated into Arabic, Urdu, Hindi and Tamil for their educational value in promoting good relations between Indians in Trinidad and Britain.[92] Furthermore, importation of Indian serials fostered the desire for more knowledge about Indian affairs; however, increased desire for more communication was manipulated by colonial personnel to keep Indians rooted in the colonies and loyal to the Empire.

Although the E.I.N.A., E.I.N.C. and the E.I.D.L. were multi-religious, the latter threatened the supply of labour for the colony with its emphasis on repatriation which counteracted the forces that were trying to make Indians remain in Trinidad. As stated previously, the elite status of members of the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. caused a social rift between them and the labourers of the colony; however, Orfy's League was a grassroots organization that was composed of East Indians (both time-expired and indentured) who worked on the estates. He was able to bridge both the physical and social gap between the labourers and himself by being in close proximity with various workers. Orfy also showed a propensity to collaborate with members of Trinidad's African population by writing in the *Argos* newspaper and appealing to the T.W.A.

[92] Governor John Chancellor to Walter Long, 29, May, 1918. C.O. 295/516.T.N.A/U.K.

IV. The 1919 strikes and T.W.A.

In the immediate aftermath of World War I, there emerged bitter antagonism between Trinidad's working masses and the dominant white creole elite who still exercised autocratic control over the colony's economic wealth. Trinidad's working masses, both East Indian and black, were suffering from low wages, unemployment and underemployment that led to many workers living in squalid living conditions. Many workers in Port of Spain were forced to live in overcrowded barrack rooms that mirrored the barrack ranges on the plantations where East Indian families lived. Barrack rooms tended to be overcrowded with indigent families sharing multiple rooms.[93] These living quarters were susceptible to heavy rain and attracted vermin such as rats and snakes; moreover, as there was a lack of ventilation in the barracks, this compromised the health of children. Kelvin Singh notes that in 1919, the general rise in prices above the pre-war level in "Port of Spain was 126%; in San Fernando 167 %; in the country districts 140%; and in Tobago 171 %."[94] This increase eroded the purchasing power of families in Trinidad thus forcing them into a state of abject poverty.

In 1919, dockworkers in Port of Spain with the help of the T.W.A. and Captain Arthur Cipriani decided to strike against their employers over poor wages. Although the strikes began in the urban areas, demonstrations quickly spread to the sugar estates where East Indians worked. Mobilization and coordination of these strikes lay with the TWA that drew both cultural and political strength from Pan-African networks such as Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Society (U.N.I.A). Leaders of the T.W.A. included Reverend Peters, David Headley, James Brathwaite, R.V. Simmons, Sidney de Bourg, S.Y. Harper C.M. Lastique, Arthur Teshes, Bruce McConney Reverend E. Selier Salmon, Julian Hinds and Fitz Brathwaite and Howard Bishop.[95] The strikers demanded that the present rate of pay of $2

[93] Singh, *Race Class and Struggles*, 15.
[94] *Ibid.* 15
[95] Major H. de Passe, Report on Agitators in Trinidad, 12, March 1920. C.O. 295/526. T.N.A./U.K

per day for a nine hour day should be raised to $3 per day for an eight hour day.[96] At first, the strike was only partial as only a small number of the stevedores who worked in the docks in Port of Spain engaged in the protest. These workers were important because their decision to strike disrupted trade between Trinidad and other countries. On November 25, a large crowd was assembled in Woodford Square outside the Red House during which Mr. James Brathwaite, Secretary of the T.W.A. demanded an interview with Governor John Chancellor with a view to securing his immediate intervention to settle the strike.

Although the strike was primarily motivated by distressed workers, the racial overtone that pervaded the demonstrations rested with the return of black soldiers who had served in the British West Indies Regiment (B.W.I.R.) during the war. It was on the battlefronts in Taranto in Italy that Arthur Cipriani had witnessed how black officers were racially discriminated against. Moreover, army personnel were indifferent to black soldiers who were entitled to their commission. When Cipriani returned to Trinidad, he became aware of the problems the West Indian labouring classes were facing, and he empathized with their plight in terms of their working conditions. According to Tony Martin, black soldiers from the B.W.I.R. had been confined for most of the war to fatigue duty, menial labour, carrying ammunition under heavy fire and garrison duty.[97] In June 1919, Governor Chancellor wrote that there was a very "strong feeling of racial antipathy"[98] that manifested itself in the colony by returning soldiers who served in the British West Indies regiment. Soldiers were disenchanted with the level of racial discrimination shown to them by the Imperial military authorities. Journalists from the *Argos* newspaper carried stories from soldiers who had arrived on the *S.S. Santille*, and had been involved in race riots in Cardiff and England. Demonstrations between blacks and whites were sparked over the "alleged wrecking of a

[96] Governor John Chancellor, Trinidad to Viscount Milner London, 29, July 1919, C.O. C.O 295/521. T.N.A./U.K
[97] Tony Martin, 'Upheaval in Trinidad 1919. Views from American and British Sources', *The Journal of Negro History*, 58 (1973), 313-326.
[98] Chancellor to Viscount Milner. C.O. 29 July, 1919 C.O. 295/521.T.N.A/U.K.

black man's funeral where whites cut off the corpse's head and used it as a football." [99] Soldiers in Trinidad then formed an organization called the Returned Soldiers and Sailors Council in which the two grievances were the dissatisfaction with the land settlement scheme as promised to them by the government upon return, and the absence of unemployment allowance that was granted to the European soldier.[100]

Soldiers expressed their disappointment at the lack of recognition for their efforts by infiltrating various cultural events throughout the island. In Port of Spain, as B.W.I.R. soldiers marched throughout Queen's Park Savannah, soldiers dressed in plain clothes made disparaging remarks about their comrades who were in uniform and especially to those who were participating in the march. Furthermore, European sailors from the *S.S. Dartmouth* who joined the bands that marched about the town as on Carnival days were assaulted, and were subjected to an array of "very lewd and disparaging remarks."[101] These actions are significant because the march represented not only the victory of Allied soldiers in World War I; it was also a chance to acknowledge the Regiment's loyalty to the Empire. Black soldiers who used this public spectacle to express their discontent illustrated awareness of the exploitative measures of the colonial administration. This would be important to the strike action, as it demonstrated that workers were willing to operate outside the constitutional framework of the colony for their demands to be heard. Moreover, there were rumours that black soldiers would use holidays like Race Day and Discovery Day to "slaughter all the whites"[102]which demonstrated that, according to some, violent actions might be deemed necessary to draw attention to the situation.

Racial consciousness among the working masses was bolstered by the distribution of what the colonial administration called 'seditious material'. Serials such as the *The Crusader*,

[99] G.H. May Constabulary Office to Chancellor, Trinidad. 29, July,1919. C.O. 295/521.T.N.A/U.K.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] . Report by Inspector of Constabulary G.H. May to Governor of Trinidad, Enclosure III. 29, June, 1919. C.O. 295/521.T.N.A/U.K.
[102] *Ibid.*

The Monitor, *The Recorder* and most importantly Marcus Garvey's *The Negro World* that were published in the United States, were circulated in Trinidad as well as in other colonies such as British Guiana.[103] The goal of Garvey's U.N.I.A. was to use the *Negro World* as a political organ for the U.N.I.A. by cultivating racial consciousness as a means of emancipating all oppressed black workers around the world.[104] According to Tony Martin, the appeal of the *Negro World* "was cited by colonial governors in Dahomey, British Honduras, Kenya and Cuba, as having a significant factor in uprisings."[105] Colonial officers in Trinidad deemed these serials as dangerous because of their policy of "antagonism to the white race."[106] In fact, the popularity of the *Negro World* was so extreme that the colonial government decided to deport those who distributed the serial in secret. However, de Passe reported that if he indeed "deported every black man in Trinidad who read the *Negro World*, the population would soon be depleted."[107] Members of the TWA such as Howard W. Bishop held meetings in areas of Port Spain such as Liberty Hall in which excerpts from the *Negro World* were read, and were then echoed by strikers. Bishop established the *Labour Leader* (1922-1933) where Garveyite literature was disseminated to rouse the working masses. Such phrases included were "To day, Today has come,! The Union Roll book is on hand! Close them down, close them down"[108] were included. According to Major de Passe's report, the colonial government was anxious about Garvey's writings particularly because "Garvey was trying to oust the white man from Africa by force of arms." [109] Garvey endeavoured to arouse race consciousness among the Negroes and advocated the establishment of Negro shops and

[103] Acting Governor Trinidad to Viscount Milner C.O. 18 June 1919. C.O 295/521.T.N.A./U.K.

[104] Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Society* (London, 1973), 23.
[105]*Ibid.* 94
[106] Acting Governor of Trinidad to Milner C.O. 18, June,1919. C.O. 295/521 .T.N.A./U.K.
[107] Major de Passe's Report on Agitators in Trinidad to Chancellor of Trinidad, 12 March , 1920 C.O. 295/526 T.N.A./U.K.

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *Ibid.*

churches. Hence the act of reading the *Negro World* synthesized both a racial and working class consciousness that brought about economic and social turmoil in Trinidad.

The Habitual Idlers Ordinance passed in 1918 was yet another antecedent that led to strike action in Port of Spain. This act exacerbated tensions between workers who were already suffering from depressed economic conditions. A 'habitual idler' referred to any person who had no visible or lawful means of subsistence and who habitually abstained from work. If after a period of time a suspected idler could not find a suitable form of work, he would be detained in a settlement for less than a year. The underlying principle of this ordinance was to bring civility to the streets of Trinidad. Rises in prices after World War I caused a flood of poor rural migration workers to the urban north who were in search of work. Stipendiary Magistrate G.C. Deane remarked

> There is in Port of Spain a large number of people constantly drifting in from the country districts attracted by the glitter of the town. These people when they first arrive are as a rule in good health, strong and clean, and bring with them some little means; they idle about the town until their means of subsistence is gone and then leaving having no longer a penny to pay for a lodging take to sleeping in the streets.[110]

Deane criminalized the people of Port of Spain by describing its inhabitants as loiterers and thieves who had no ambition. Individuals who resorted to stealing were mere idlers and parasites of the colony that needed to be reformed by performing hard labour, such as the cultivation of crops and vegetables.[111] In fact, he cited evidence that the Ordinance was an effective measure to bring down instances of praedial larceny of which there were 210 cases in 1917. Praedial larceny was perceived as a deterrent for people to not invest effort in cultivating produce. Edgar Tripp of the Agricultural Society stated that planters, small proprietors and contractors recommended that people who were caught stealing should be flogged, and suggested that plots of land in the Naparima estates as well as San Fernando

[110] Habitual Idlers Ordinance. Trinidad Council Paper 40. 1919. Stipendiary Magistrate G.C.Deane. C.O.295/523. T.N.A./U.K.
[111] *Ibid.*

should be dedicated to offenders under the Habitual Idlers Ordinance.[112]As Trinidad's economy was dependent on its agricultural industry, praedial larceny threatened the financial stability of a country that was already in a weak state.

Included in the Habitual Idlers Ordinance, was a measure to satisfy the planters who needed a source of cheap labour after indentureship was terminated in order to keep wages down.[113] In fact, the India Office asked how long the duration was for one to be considered a Habitual Idler,[114] for fear this would reignite Indian nationalist sentiments over the ill-treatment of Indians abroad. Members of the T.W.A. submitted a petition to repeal the Habitual Idlers Ordinance claiming that the "Ordinance proceeds upon the erroneous principles that labour is a matter of compulsion (and not of contract) and that pressure may be legitimately brought to bear upon working men in order to get them to conform to the desires of employers."[115] The shortage of labour would be remedied by the encouragement of cane farming, a larger scale of labour saving appliances and most importantly wages that would correspond to the increased cost of living.[116] Over 3,093 workers in Trinidad (from areas such as Port of Spain, Tunapuna, Chaguanas, Toco, Manzanilla, Arouca, Arima and San Fernando) that included teachers, seamstresses, butchers, boot makers, book makers, tailors, barristers, solicitors, clerks, hucksters, accountants and planters signed this petition under the leadership of the T.W.A. for the repeal of the Ordinance.[117]

Included in this mass of signatures was a list of East Indian rural labourers, cane farmers, proprietors and artisans who showed solidarity with the urban workers of Port of

[112] Agricultural Society Secretary Edgar Tripp.C.O. Habitual Idlers Ordinance. Council Paper 40. 1919. 295/523 T.N.A./U.K

[113] *Ibid.*
[114] I.O. to Viscount Milner C.O, 1918. I.O.R. L/PJ/6/1615.File 1615. B.L.

[115] Petition of Trinidad Workingman's Association. 1919. C.O 295/521.T.N.A/U.K.

[116] *Ibid.*
[117] Chancellor to Milner C.O. 1919. C.O. 295/521.T.N.A/U.K

Spain.[118] This list demonstrates that East Indians from 'below' made up of various religious and class affiliations were taking it upon themselves to participate in methods of agitation at a time when strikes and demonstrations had the ability to push for reform; hence it was up to the East Indian elite to guide and represent the wishes of their people In the midst of the dockland strike, officials observed:

> One point more in the years gone by the large East Indian indentured numbering many thousands and largely under the control of their respective plantations owners managers and overseers was looked upon as a substantial safeguard against trouble with negroes and vice versa. With the abolition of immigration such a counterpoise has ceased to exist and the "Creole coolie" will either remain an interested spectator or join the mob. [119]

East Indians were no longer to be an opposing body to the creoles. Collectively, this breed of "creole coolie" that had no defined ethnic or class affiliation was starting to break down the system of indentureship that was the long arm of British paternalism and rule designed to secure cheap labour. In this context, the Creole coolie made up a loose group of interested parties. As a group, they redefined the original terms of arrival that had displaced the Afro-Trinidadian labourer to mark their sense of ownership and articulate that they were equal participants in the political affairs of Trinidad.

Colonel May connected the interference with grass carts by coolies and the disturbances at Caroni with sympathy among the labouring classes generally. Seeing how disorders spread, one must imagine that there had been some organisation beforehand. It had come to light that the T.W.A. held meetings all over the colony, and emissaries like Headley and Braithwaite encouraged East Indian leaders to join their Union. They were forming branches, advocating, fighting for higher wages, and spreading unity by saying that in Unity lay strength. May knew that before December 01, the T.W.A. had been active for some time, but he could not say whether any East Indians had joined. The T.W.A. claimed to have a large

[118] Memorial of the Inhabitants of Trinidad and Tobago to Viscount Miller Principal Under Secretary for the Colonies. C.O. 295/523. T.N.A./U.K

[119] Geo Huggins, C. De Verteuil , Colonel J.A Bell Smythe, Major A.S. Bowen, A.H. Maclean to Colonial Secretary, 20, July, 1919. C.O. 295/522 T.N.A./U.K.

membership of 8,000 people, although again he could not say how true it was, or whether the figure included East Indians. As well, there had been a strike of East Indian women at Cedros, but he could not say whether they had any connection with the T.W.A.[120]

In the midst of the disturbances of 1919, the body of an Indian man named Behari Singh was found near Woodford Lodge. Behari had been the leader of rioters there, and was found in field a short distance from the disturbances. The post mortem examination disclosed that death was due to a ruptured spleen, caused by a blow from a blunt instrument. The incident caused considerable agitation among the East Indian population, as it was rumoured that he had been killed by an employee at Woodford Lodge Estate named Anderson. Meetings held by the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. discussed the situation and arranged for the Association to be represented at the inquest, whereupon charges were freely made by the East Indians and their legal representative that the constabulary was endeavouring to shield Anderson by withholding evidence.[121]

Representatives of the E.I.N.A. and the E.I.N.C. responded to the death of Lal Behari Singh and the industrial upheaval in Trinidad by issuing a word of caution to all East Indians who decided to partake in strike action. This statement was published in the *Argos* newspaper:

> We appeal to your sense of honour in view of our glorious past, to abstain from all violent and disgraceful conduct as is prevalent at the present day. Return to your daily task with the hope and consciousness that your just claims will be amply looked after and defended...The Association is doubly prepared to see to it that ordinary justice and fairplay shall be accorded to East Indians as is compatible with British sense of honour and justice.[122]

Printing an appeal for East Indians to abstain from striking in the *Argos* paper (that was dedicated to working-class movements), indicated that both the E.I.N.C and the E.I.N.A. sought to dissuade the East Indian community from joining a working-class movement. Their

[120] 'Report on Disturbances in Port of Spain 1919'. Reports by the Commissioners Appointed to Enquire on the Conduct of the Constabulary, 1919. C.O 884/13/7.T.N.A/U.K.
[121] Chancellor to Milner C.O. 27, January, 1920. C.O. 295/526.T.N.A/U.K
[122] *E.I.H.*, December 1919, 10, 'East Indian Labour Community'. N.A.T.T.

statements reflect the fact that East Indian leaders in these organizations preferred that problems affecting East Indian labourers should be rectified by appealing to the constitutional framework of the colony that was upheld by British ideals of citizenship. In other words, perhaps, some of the educated East Indian leaders sought, as much as the British, to persuade East Indian workers to not make common cause with their African compatriots.

To keep the "Creole coolie" in check, the members and the political sensibilities of the E.I.N.A. and the E.I.N.C. were important for the British to maintain some form of rule. After the death of George Fitzpatrick, Reverend Charles David Lalla was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1920. He was a graduate of the Canadian Theological Presbyterian College at San Fernando and a member of the Agricultural Society.[123]The decision came from his popularity within the East Indian community and the government. Characteristics of ethnicity mattered to these organizations. The appointment of C.H. Gopaul to the Board of Education in Trinidad was denounced by the E.I.N.A. and E.I.N.C. Although he carried an East Indian name, he was of Chinese descent- something that was claimed to inhibit his abilities to represent the interests of their communities. Also, he did not understand the languages of Hindus and Muslims or their customs.[124] Using the language of population representation, organization members argued that Gopaul be dismissed as East Indians occupied no less of an important space in the labour industries and contributed to large general revenues. Simultaneously both organizations sought to include the East Indian in the political affairs of Trinidad along the lines of their visible presence in the colony. Yet by emphasizing visibility, both organizations excluded those who merged with the African masses and those who were not of East Indian descent.

In the aftermath of the strikes of 1919, the Seditious Publications Ordinance was introduced by the colonial government in 1920 as a countermeasure to prevent newspapers,

[123] *Jubilee of the Trinidad Mission 1868-1928*. Back-cover of pamphlet (Toronto, 1928). U.C.A
[124] E.I.N.A. to Secretary of State of Colonies. C.O.295/523. T.N.A/U.K

pamphlets or serials from inciting disturbances. Under this ordinance, seditious material constituted writings that had the potential to:

a) bring hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the person of His Majesty, his heirs or successors, or the government and constitution of the United Kingdom, or this colony or any other British possession or Protectorate, as by law established or either House of Parliament or the Executive or Legislative Council
b) To excite His Majesty's subjects to attempt otherwise than by lawful means, to procure the alteration of any matter in the State by law established and
c) to raise discontent or disaffection amongst his Majesty's subjects.
d) To promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different classes or races of such subjects. [125]

This piece of legislation was important to Trinidad, as copies of Marcus Garvey's the *Negro World* that were printed in the United States were deemed "poisonous material that stirred up race hatred between the black and white inhabitants of Trinidad."[126] If a person was caught selling, publishing or had the intention to procure seditious material, he or she would could be fined up to one thousand pounds and imprisoned. Moreover, the passing of this Ordinance ensured loyalty to the Crown government. Trinidad's black working-class used Garvey's writings to channel racial pride in their demands for increased wages in various labour industries. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Indian materials such as the *Free Hindusthan* paper had the ability to galvanize East Indians into using such propaganda to engage in working class struggles. The dissemination of Garvey's Pan- African paper was a key moment in the history of labour development in Trinidad. It sent a warning to the colonial government that the working-class in Trinidad were poised to rightfully claim by virtue of their contribution to the labour industry, the right to be heard in the financial dealings of the colony.

VI. Representation and constitutional reform. E.F.L. Wood (Lord Halifax) and the memorials of the EINC and EINA.

Following the strikes of 1919 and in the aftermath of indenture, the question of constitutional reform came up again. At the ground level, both the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. used pamphlets

[125] Seditious Publications Ordinance. 1920. C.O. 295/526.T.N.A./U.K.
[126] Minute by George Grindle on Seditious Publications Ordinance Act 1920. C.O. 295/526.T.N.A./U.K.

and serials as outlets to not only consolidate their platforms, but to also to cultivate the political and social consciousness of East Indians in the entire colony.[127] The citizens of Trinidad and Tobago still had limited means of representation. The question of constitutional reform came up again and culminated with the visit of the Honourable E.F.L Wood. The purpose of his visit in 1922 was to determine whether Trinidad and Tobago deserved a form of self-government.

Literature served as a means to unite the East Indian communities all over the island into a single political body. Serials such as *The East Indian Herald* (1919), *The East Indian Patriot* (1925) and *The East Indian Weekly* (1928) were the political organs of the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. organizations. In each respective journal, Canadian Presbyterians were praised, the successes of East Indian students who went abroad to study were noted, and activities in churches, mosques and temples highlighted. Serials like these illustrated the activities of clubs around the island that were forums for discussing issues such as repatriation fees, the legalization of Muslim and Hindu marriages, lands, and prices of sugar and cocoa. Noteworthy events included a lecture by Jules Mahabir, a noted barrister who spoke on Parliamentary government in England. He outlined the evolution of the British Parliament from the Saxon Wittangemot to Simon du Montefort. Mahabir suggested that Montefort was the first to summon representatives from the towns, and to form a Parliament composed of peers, county members and borough members.[128] In addition, J.D. Ramkeesoon taught the benefits of reading Charles Dickens.[129] These events were put on by the literary and debating societies which socialized East Indian youth into the inherent British culture found in a colonial society.

[127] Kris Rampersad, *Finding A Place in Indo-Caribbean Literature* (Kingston, 2003).
[128] E.I.H , February 1920, 12, 'Southern East Indian Literary and Debating Associaton'. N.A.T.T.
[129] *Ibid*. August 1920, 13, 'J.D. Ramkeesoon on Dickens'.

The activities of East Indian Debating and Literary Societies functioned as a means to inculcate in East Indian youth a sense of their history, to discuss matters affecting their communities, and to espouse the ideals of members exhibited by the East Indian elite. Topics and questions for debates included whether the neglect of "education of East Indian girls was a reflection on the community;"[130] "whether the adoption of the local silver currency would be good for the colony;"[131] "whether town life was better than city life;"[132] and that in order to "ensure a sufficient food supply, it was necessary that legislation on the planting of ground provisions be passed."[133] The Port of Spain East Indian Literary Club at Woodbrook Canadian Mission (C.M.) debated against the Cedros East Indian Literary club as to "whether the abolition of East Indian Immigration will react helpfully on the local East Indian community."[134] The debate which was conducted in Hindi ended in a tie.[135] Advertising for essay competitions on topics such as "What Trinidad owes to East Indian migration,"[136]constructed the legacy of indentureship and served as a means of remembering their ancestors. In a follow up to this essay competition, annual reports from the Protector of Immigrants were reprinted in the journals showing the returns of cane production by identifying the amount of cane produced by East Indians compared to that of West Indians. The remarks at the end of the report read: "The following returns contained in the Protector of Immigrants' administration report for 1919 are interesting as showing the extent to which our East Indian population is engaged in developing the cane farming industry as compared with West Indians in the same pursuit."[137] These Annual Reports that were used to ensure the continuation of indentureship were now being manipulated to establish a sense that East

[130] *Ibid.* October, 1919, 12, 'Port of Spain Literary Essay Competition'.
[131] *Ibid.* August, 1920, 12, 'The East Indian Literary Club, Port of Spain'.
[132] *Ibid* .January, 1922, 15 'St. Andrews East Indian Debating Society'.
[133] *Ibid.* October, 1919, 12, 'Port of Spain Literary Essay Competition'.
[134] *Ibid,* September 1919, 11,'East Indian Inter-club debate'.
[135] *Ibid.*
[136] *Ibid*. October 1919, 11, 'Essay Competition'.
[137]Ibid. August 1920, 13, 'Debate'.

Indians belonged to Trinidad. Yet there was the marked continuity of privileging the labour contributions of the Indians over the presence of the Afro-Trinidadian.

The capacity to blend the diasporic imagination of the Indian homeland by using the language of British citizenship was also a hallmark designed to articulate the presence of the East Indian in Trinidad. Two excerpts from the *East Indian Herald* and *East Indian Patriot* capture this development and they are worth quoting at length. On the cover of the *East Indian Herald*, Charles David Lalla remarked:

> We observe that the illustration appearing on the front cover is manifestly typical of the East which has already transmitted to the West, the most civilizing factor of the world. The picture strikingly depicts the dawn of a new era of progress to the East Indian commonwealth. This too, at a time when the motherland (Mataram) is actually breaking away from the leading strings of officialdom, and is gradually shaping the political course towards her legitimate place under the British Raj." [138]

Figure 10: Front Cover of the East Indian Herald. Source: *The East Indian Herald*, October, 1919.

[138] *Ibid.* October, 1919, 4 'To the Editor of the E.I.H., Reverend C.D. Lalla'.

In the *East Indian Patriot*, in 1925, Khalifa Sayad Abdul Aziz, noted leader of the Muslim community in Trinidad and one of the founders of the E.I.N.A., wrote:

> In the equality of nationhood which the preceding doctrine unhesitatingly teaches as to be found those fundamental principles which are destined to make for the stability of the Empire which God has produced through the genius of the British race, as a heritage for the Commonwealth of nations which at present characterise the British Empire and which we claim the inherent right of citizenship. Those who preach and practice these principles above and beyond all else are true citizens of the Empire and are worthy to bear the name of a citizen, and fully share in that glorious tradition of the Greatest Empire the world has ever seen. On the other hand, those who merely preach these principles but practice racial discrimination of whatsoever kind within the Empire are traitors to the cause of the Empire as they are manifestly heading for the overthrow of the empire which is our boasted heritage and the heritage of our children's children. If this heritage is to be perpetuated and its glory handed down to posterity in a manner and at the same time blessing of posterity then the former ideal must be and the latter must not.[139]

Readers and writers in of the *East Indian Herald* and *Patriot* may not have had tangible experiences of India. The picture on the front cover of the Herald and the rhetoric used in the Patriot when considered in light of developments such as the termination of indentureship, strikes, constitutional reform, and a time when India was also seeking home rule, represent creolizing moments that are transnational in nature. As children of India, East Indians under the auspices of the British Empire were forging a cohesive community to articulate their sense of indigeneity and belonging in a time of upheaval. However, while these serials consolidated the East Indian population, inherently they were exclusive, as again the presence of the African populace was left out.

Following the disturbances in the immediate aftermath of World War I, the debate about constitutional reform in the West Indies aroused the attention of the British government. West Indian subjects demanded an elective principle in their respective constitutions and the extension of adult suffrage. This would allow West Indians to elect their own representatives to their Legislative Council. In 1923, this shift in Crown rule culminated in E.F.L Wood's visit to the West Indies. During his time in the various colonies, he observed,

[139] *East Indian Patriot*, September, 1924, 5, 'Mission Field's Appreciation. Tribute to Reverend Charles David Lalla'. N.A.T.T.

listened and received a myriad of petitions from those who sought to represent the interests of the West Indies. It was his duty to ascertain whether the inhabitants of these colonies were ready for a form of self-government. For East Indians in Trinidad, constitutional reform and the matter of representation on the political welfare of their homeland was of profound importance for through this, they would gain the necessary tools needed to ensure the welfare of their communities.

Wood noted that Trinidad was a cosmopolitan colony in which there was a French Creole elite, Chinese labourers, people of African descent and a substantial East Indian population.[140] In a memorial to Wood, the EINC under the leadership of Charles David Lalla presented their case as to why any system that required nomination through elections to the council was a bad one. All members had high financial standings in society. It is important to note that although the EINC was led by a Christian member of the Legislative Council, East Indians as well took it upon themselves to represent Hindu and Muslim sections of the East Indian community in Trinidad. Prominent people in the EINC included, Parmanand Pundit the recognized head of the Hindu community and President of the East EINC; Moulvi Fazal Kareem Khan, BA and the religious head of the Muslim community; H.D. Imamshah missionary and catechist; Latchmi Parasad, a pundit; Ramdhani,a pundit; Mahut Newal Das, the officiating head of the Kabir brotherhood; Babu Lalsingh; a merchant and cane farmer; Saghar, a merchant and an editor of the *East Indian Patriot*; Dr. S.A. Sumadh; Harry Har, a merchant and cocoa proprietor; A. Bharat Gobin, a merchant proprietor; Mohammed Hosein, a cocoa proprietor; Adjohda Maharaj, a merchant proprietor; Charka Dyal Maharaj, a merchant and cocoa proprietor; Stephen Ramrelea, a catechist and cocoa proprietor; James Sukhram, a merchant proprietor; and G.B. Harris, an East Indian accountant and proprietor.[141]

[140] BPP. XVI,1922, (*Report by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Hon. E. F. L. Wood, M.P., on a visit to the West Indies and British Guiana, 1921-22*), p. 23
[141] Memorial of E.I.N.C. submitted to E. F. L. Wood, 1923. C.O 295/544. T.N.A./U.K.

Their list of recommendations included the repatriation of orphans and immigrants, that Hindi be taught in all schools and that there should be a renewal of Indian immigration. They also wanted some form of constitutional machinery that recognized the legal validity of Hindu and Muslim marriages. If a couple from these faiths did not register with the civil authorities in the colony, their marriage would be illegitimate. Given the nature of these recommendations, it suggests that Indians residing in Trinidad occupied a liminal status in the colony where their sense of homeland was still not defined. The preference for communal representation arose from a sense of anxiety amongst East Indians in that they would be outvoted and displaced.

The petition that was presented to Wood reflected how members of the EINC thought about the presence of the Indian in Trinidad in historical terms. The petitioners stated that they were the sons of former indentured labourers who had transformed Trinidad into a metropolis of the West Indies after the liberated slaves exerted their free rights to leave the plantations, and that these former slaves endangered the financial prosperity of the island.[142] The West Indians (Afro-Trinidadians) had neglected the agricultural interest of the island which had necessitated the introduction of the Indian people.

By virtue of their sacrifice in leaving India and working on plantations, East Indians had a natural and inherent right to demand more representation on the Legislative Council. The E.I.N.C. acknowledged the fact that there was a disproportionate representation of East Indians in government offices Boards. As British citizens and subjects, having a system of representation by election would entail the disenfranchisement of the East Indian population based on numerical arguments. Rather, a system of proportional representation would be best. Here they cited places such as like Denmark, Switzerland, Belgium, Wurttemberg, Sweden, Finland, Tasmania, Transvaal and even India, where the "Representation of the People's Act"

[142] *Ibid.*

would result in this principle of taxpayers having the ability to elected officials to government rather than the Governor.[143] The use of these international examples illustrated how East Indian leaders sought to carve out their sense of belonging on a transnational scale. The example of India's own constitutional arrangement under British rule is also noteworthy because East Indians in Trinidad were their using their ancestral homeland's struggle for Home Rule to articulate their mode of belonging to Trinidad. The process of East Indians becoming indigenized to Trinidad was transnational, as these cases of political arrangements, and the exchange of knowledge of governmental affairs had a direct bearing on how East Indians would go about in demanding more civic rights in their host country. In 1923, a limited franchise was introduced that was based on educational, financial and English language qualifications for both voters and those candidates who sought to be on the Legislative Council.

VII. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the concept of the "Creole Indian" illustrates how East Indians were collectively forming an identity to demand civic rights in a Crown Colony. Crucial to these developments was the reality that groups who petitioned for a physical return to India were gradually being phased out. A return to homeland was no longer a viable option; rather, East Indians were permanent settlers. For groups like the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A, their scope of creolization relied on an imaginative India. It rested on the idea of an East Indian community that was peopled by Indian indentured labourers who had rescued the colony from the Africans and who, with the education from the Presbyterian mission became proprietors, teachers, lawyers and doctors. Most importantly, they were loyal to the Empire. Their sense of indigeneity can be seen from recurrent phrases or the symbols of land and labour that they used. Figures like Fitzpatrick, Hosein and Lalla epitomized these tenets, as

[143] *Ibid.* Also see Singh, *Race and Class Struggles*, 132.

they were the physical manifestations of the positive results Indian emigration would entail when the idea of indentureship had been conceived. These gentlemen were then co-opted by the Crown government to justify the need for British rule during times of upheaval; this in turn fitted into debates over the nature of Crown rule. This would sow the seeds of discontent between Afro-Trinidadians and East Indians and usher in the concept of divide and rule which would haunt the future of Trinidad's politics. At this time, this sense of collective representation excluded other parties. These Creole Indians in the elite Indian organizations excluded those who were poor, who wanted to return to India, and to a certain extent cooperated with Afro-Trinidadians. In the next chapter we shall see how these disenfranchised groups would form a series of alliances with Afro-Trinidadians and other parties. These affiliations occurred on both a domestic and international scale during a time of global anti-colonial nationalism that would rock the foundations of British rule.

Chapter 4

Trade Union, Temple, Mosque and the Politics of Anti-Colonial Nationalism 1925-1938

I. Introduction

On July 06, 1934, some three to four hundred East Indian labourers gathered at the Warden's Office in Couva to voice their complaints. At the Esperanza estate, workers withheld their labour on account of the size of tasks given to them, which resulted in an assault on the manager and the overseer. The sub-inspector, together with a force from the Southern Division made fifteen arrests and escorted the prisoners to Couva station.[1] The actions of the labourers and their appeals evolved into widespread strikes taking place on prominent sugar estates at Esperanza, Brechin Castle, Forres Park, Waterloo, Woodford Lodge, and Caroni.[2] According to acting Governor of Trinidad Selwyn Grier, employment on the sugar estates during the month of July was difficult, as East Indian labourers preferred to attend to their rice plots rather than work on the estates during this season. [3] On the surface, the absence of rain in June and July led to failures in the rice crops; this meant that East Indian labourers needed work which was difficult to obtain especially on the Caroni and Esperanza estates. [4]

Antecedents of the strikes can be traced to systemic problems in workplace conditions and mismanagement of labour. The sizes of tasks were becoming harder due to improper tools, and daily wages did not reflect labour input. Grier wrote to Cunliffe-Lister of the Colonial office that, "it is alleged that agitators have been at work, but even if this is so, I believe that the main cause of the trouble is the policy of retrenchment adopted by the

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[1] Selwyn Grier, Trinidad to Cunliffe Lister, London. Investigation into Labour Disturbances, 1934 C.O 295/585/11.T.N.A/U.K.

[2] *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the labour disturbances on certain Sugar Estates Trinidad, 1934* Council Paper No. 61, 1934, I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318. B.L.
See also Sahadeo Basdeo, 'The 1934 Indian Labour Disturbances in Trinidad: A Case Study in Colonial Labour Relations' in Bridget Brereton and Winston Dookeran (eds.), *East Indians in the Caribbean* (Trinidad, 1975), 49-71.

[3] Investigation into Labour Disturbances 1934. C.O 295/585/11.T.N.A./U.K.

[4] *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the labour disturbances on certain Sugar Estates Trinidad, 1934* Council Paper No. 61, 1934, I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318 B.L.

managements of Caroni and Esperanza. My information is that during the last 2 ½ months, they had reduced their expenditure on wages by approximately 70% and the latter by 40%."[5] To appease East Indian workers who had attended to rice planting fields, colonial officers agreed that proper irrigation facilities would be provided. Added to these grievances was that there was an uneven distribution of funds for poor relief. The 1934 disturbances reveal the sense of vulnerability East Indians experienced as their livelihoods were being threatened.

These disturbances of 1934 also sparked concern amongst colonial officers about the growing dissatisfaction amongst the East Indian labouring classes. Previously in 1924, almost four to five hundred workers in the weeding gangs on Caroni estate engaged in strike action as a result of an increase in tasks on the estate.[6] A prevalent problem was that cane farmers did not receive the promised wages from manufacturers on their supply of cane. For example, allegations were made against the Melrose estate (owned by Woodford Lodge factory), that farmers were robbed nearly 40 cents on every ton of canes delivered to manufacturers. [7]

By use of a "sliding scale," manufacturing companies arbitrarily changed the prices for each ton of cane supplied to the company by the farmers. For example, in 1927, it was decided that the price of sugar canes in the colony for that year be fixed at $3.45 per ton. In the Savana Grande district, the Colonial Company paid $2.88 and $3.36 per ton respectively on the delivery of the canes and Craignish paid one rate which was $3.36 per ton on delivery. The Colonial Company, which owned the Madeleine St. Usine factory, cleared up the difference of 57cents to those farmers who had received $2.88 on delivery, but those who received $3.36 got nothing more. When application was made to both the Colonial Company and Craignish for the difference of 9 cents on each ton sold, the farmers were told by the authorities that they were already paid for their value of the canes at the first rate which was

[5] *Ibid*.
[6] *L.L.*, 16 June, 1923 , 11 'Caroni Labour Strike'.
[7] *Ibid*. 3 August, 1927, 'Cane Farmer's Dispute'.

not in accordance with the fixed price.[8] Scale robbery was also a problem. Factory owners at Brechin Castle brought in new scales to weigh cane; however, on many occasions, these scales under-weighed the canes brought in by the farmers.[9] Why, one wonders, was 1934 was such a shock to colonial authorities when there was already evidence of discontent because of these occurrences?

The answer lies in the fact that there was a degree of organization and agitation amongst East Indian labourers and their leaders, as noted in the report. Overseers at Esperanza estate surmised that grievances about task sizes amongst banking gangs were being spread to other work gangs. There was evidence of solidarity between different areas where the demonstrations took place, and it was not only the labourers who were engaging in subversive acts. The report by F. Gordon Smith stated: "The attitude of certain elements of the younger generation, in particular of the labouring class, not only towards the management of the estates, but also towards constituted authority, gives cause for anxiety."[10] Amongst "East Indians, there was a lack of restraint and irresponsibility... There is always considerable danger of disorders arising from demonstrations by this class of people, and persons who organize such demonstrations must realize their responsibility."[11] Those East Indians who were involved in giving evidence on the plight of East Indian sugar cane workers included Mitra Sinanan, a barrister of Middle Temple,[12] Seereram Maharaj a pundit, and leader of the Hindu reformist movement in Trinidad known as the Arya Samaj[13] and Sarran

[8] *Ibid*. 20 August, 1927, 12 'Cane Farmer'.
[9] *Ibid*. 5 April, 1924, 'A Cane Farmer's Grievance'.
[10] *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the labour disturbances on certain Sugar Estates Trinidad, 1934* Council Paper No. 61, 1934, I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318.B.L.

[11] Governor of Trinidad A. Hollis to Cunliffe Lister C.O. 1934 C.O 295/585/11.T.N.A/U.K.
[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Trinidad Guardian* , 18 November, 1934, 'Local News'.

Teelucksingh,[14] member of the E.I.N.C. and the elected representative on the Legislative Council for the County of Caroni.

The 1934 disturbances were indeed a violent eruption of East Indian discontent with labour conditions. Yet this striking moment in the historiography of social unrest in Trinidad remains but a prelude to the 1937 strike on Trinidad's oilfields.[15] It is well known that the conflicts predominantly involved East Indians; however, for one to understand East Indian participation in a time of unrest that swept the island and the entire Caribbean region, one must look at the range of issues that impacted East Indians and Afro-Trinidadians. This broader perspective shows how the 1934 disturbances fit in with the overall picture of widespread rebellion.

In the 1930s, low wages, rising prices, mass unemployment and a crippled agricultural sector fostered discontent amongst Trinidad's working masses. In his *History of the Working Class in Trinidad 1919-1956*, Bukka Rennie sought to define what he termed a "Creole nationalist movement." This phenomenon brings to light the methods that citizens of Trinidad and Tobago both black and East Indian, descendants of slaves and indentured workers were taking responsibility to voice their concerns. Rennie argues that "Creole nationalist movement" was a movement of the middle-class Caribbean that sought constitutional reform so as to obtain for themselves political representation.[16] Central to the Creole nationalist agenda or mass movement was the structured leadership of the "mass party". At the heart of the "mass party" was the "simple party" that was made up of a small nucleus or group of elite professional politicians and political activists, who were once

[14] *Report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the labour disturbances on certain Sugar Estates Trinidad, 1934* Council Paper No. 61, 1934, I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318. B.L.

[15] Nigel Bolland, *On the March Labour Rebellions in the British Caribbean, 1934-39 (Kingston, 1995)*, Kelvin Singh, *Race and Class Struggles in a Colonial State: Trinidad 1917-1945 (*Calgary, 1994) and Sahadeo Basdeo *Labour organisation and Labour Reform in Trinidad, 1919-1939* (St. Augustine, 1983).

[16] Bukka Rennie, The *History of the Working-Class in the 20th century (1919-1956) : the Trinidad and Tobago experience* (Port of Spain, 1973), 6.

independent, but had become part of the mass movement.[17] The crux of the simple party in the interwar period was to direct the restlessness of the working masses, or those from below, into a single channel of momentum.

This chapter explores the different pathways and ideas of East Indians to consolidate their mass parties. Against the backdrop of these developments was the double event of the final collapse of indentureship (1920), and the expansion of the franchise brought about by limited constitutional reform (1923). A younger generation of East Indians who had no tie to India found themselves coming face to face with a wider society that included Afro-Trinidadians who were also seeking more political representation. In the inter-war period, pertinent issues facing East Indians included mass unemployment, repressive conditions in the workplace, and the lack of legal recognition for Muslim and Hindu marriages. Representation on the Legislative Council was vital for East Indians. The cultivation of an East Indian mass party (or more accurately parties), arose from the exclusive practices of the conservative East Indian elite in both the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. Hence the protean "simple party" made up of lawyers, businessmen pundits, imams, politicized institutions like the temples, mosques and trade unions to serving as the basis of the mass party. The disenfranchised East Indians and their mass parties formed part of, and responded to transnational- anticolonial movements of the 1930s occurring in Britain, India and Trinidad amongst the Afro-Trinidadian and Indian masses. At this moment, the relationship between labour and colonial development and self-government informed ideas of race, ethnicity and culture. This mixture was expressed and operated by individuals at both the elite and ground level in a variety of ways. Central to this was a diasporic imagination that linked the past, present and future of India's struggle for West Indian self-government.

[17] *Ibid*.

Apart from official records, sources for this chapter include newspaper serials like the *East Indian Weekly,* edited by C.B. Mathura; the *Labour Leader; The Beacon* (1931-1933) edited by Albert Gomes, and *The People* edited by Howard Lytton (1933-1943). They became important outlets for both private citizens and the leaders of various organizations to express party platforms. Contributors gave candid views on the social and political climate of the day and included notices of important meetings and lectures. Moreover, submissions came in the form of poems, stories, comic strips such as "Lizzie and Joe" and "Suzie and Sambo", all of which were outlets of expression of how improvements could be made to local communities.

After the granting of a limited franchise in 1923, East Indian organizations that were created in the late nineteenth century came under pressure to effectively deal with the predicaments facing East Indians after the termination of indentureship. As seen in the previous chapter, the leaders of the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A., with a strong Christian element preferred to work within the constitutional boundaries of a Crown Colony.[18] Although East Indian organizations could appeal to the Protector of Immigrants, in practice, the office was diminished in its capacity to effectively advocate for East Indian interests. Now that indentureship was over and an elective principle for the legislature was introduced, officials in this position merely filed reports to keep both the Colonial and Indian offices informed of the conditions of East Indians in the colony. Hence, representation in the Legislative Council was crucial. Between 1925 and 1928, the following three East Indians were elected: Sarran Teelucksingh, for the County of Caroni who was a leader in the Presbyterian Church, builder of The Couva Electric Theatre and a reputable shop owner. Timothy Roodal was elected for the County of St. Patrick and F.E.M Hosein for the County of St. George.[19]

[18]Kelvin Singh,'Conflict and Collaboration. Traditional and Modernizing Indo-Trinidadian Elites (1917-1956)', *New West Indian Guide/Niewe West-Indische Gids, 7*0, (1996), 229-253.
[19]Jerome Teelucksingh, 'Brownskin Politics East Indians and Party Politics in Trinidad', *Diaspora Studies* , 2 (2009), 143-158.

During the indentureship period, labour was racialized, and the working masses in Trinidad ordered in a way that subsequently divided East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian. Following the dock strikes of 1919, the T.W.A. operated as an ad hoc trade union to champion the causes of all Trinidadian labourers. At this point, Arthur Cipriani was both president of the T.W.A. and the elected mayor of Port of Spain. Cipriani and Howard Bishop strengthened the T.W.A. by using the *Labour Leader,* which was an important medium for Trinidad's working masses to voice their concerns. Articles on "Negro race consciousness", supplemented by Garveyite literature were regularly featured in the paper. The Wood Commission forged a sense of responsibility amongst Trinidad's masses to become knowledgeable about issues pertaining to education, economics, and medical services as reforms to the constitution brought them a step closer to self-government.[20] Knowledge of these matters would not only address inadequacies in these sectors, but would also "improve" the racial character of Trinidad's black masses. It would prove that they were capable of exercising their right to become sovereign in a nation that they had built up with their own labour. In a column called "Race Essentials", India's nationalist struggle and other parts of Africa globalized the consciousness of Trinidadians who were facing similar struggles for self-government in the Empire. An excerpt from an article entitled "The New Negro" read as follows: "The New Negro faces the world. The New Negro regards the nations of the world as they move up and down the great scene and stage of life. The Negro studies [the New Negro] as he goes in the great marts and sets the wheels of industry going. The Negro sees [the New Negro] as he plows the seas carrying the commerce of one country to another country. The Negro sees [the New Negro] as he sits down at the council table and devises laws and works out schemes for the government of the world. The New Negro says that if other men can govern the world and can hold nations and empires in their hands- why can't

[20] *L.L.*, 24 May, 1924 ,'Race Essentials, Major Wood in the West Indies'. N.A.T.T.

I?"[21] Cipriani and his lieutenants linked class and race in an anti-colonial struggle in which the TWA would serve to channel this surge of race consciousness.

Constitutional reform drove the nationalist momentum amongst Trinidad's multicultural population to enable its citizens to become sovereigns in the nation they had helped to develop. However, increasing racial consciousness divided both East Indian and Afro-Trinidadians. At the Bharat Bischar Ashram Temple, located in Tunapuna, P.P Gayadeen called upon East Indians of Trinidad to focus their attention to nationalist movements both in Trinidad and the Indian subcontinent. He stated: "In this new era of Forward Movement throughout the whole world, the spirit of National Consciousness is paramount in the minds of Indian leaders and Compatriots at home and abroad, and it behooves us here in Trinidad to rise to a sense of national awakening."[22] However, Gayadeen cautioned that this spirit of nationalism in Trinidad was undermining the East Indian race, and if something was not done, the entire Indian population would be a disgrace to the Indian nation. He called upon clubs, organizations, debating societies and religious organizations to safeguard the culture of the East Indian populace, especially for a rising young generation.[23]

Gayadeen's sentiments complemented F. E. M. Hosein's critical evaluations of the Wood Commission. Trinidad was beginning to develop its mineral industries to increase its commercial value by investing in coal with a view to becoming in important naval station. However, the colony would still draw its strength from its agricultural sector where the majority of East Indian peasants still worked. Hosein argued that the political identity of East Indians was being displaced or absorbed by the wants of both black and white politicians in the Legislature who cared not for agriculture. He stated: "If desirable, means should be adopted to preserve the purity and pride of the race. "The process of denationalization of the Indian born of the colony is even now proceeding rapidly apace and if unchecked, there is

[21] *Ibid*. 17 May, 1924, 'Race Essentials, The New Negro Faces the World'.
[22] *East India Weekly (E.I.W.)*,7, May, 1928, 'For the service of East Indian culture'.
[23] *Ibid.*

every indication that the younger generation of East Indians will be completely assimilated and absorbed by the coloured race in that period of time."[24] Both the political identity and racial identity of East Indians in Trinidad were entwined and informed by their contribution to agriculture. With the collapse of indentureship and the industrial development of the colony, the historical presence and legacy of East Indians in the island were at stake.

The historical contribution of East Indians to certain industries in the indentureship period defined the racial identity of East Indians in Trinidad. Awareness of this amongst East Indians in the post-indentureship period played a crucial role in the political avenues that East Indians pursued in a time when Trinidad was undergoing industrial and political upheaval. However, in practice, these conceptions took on various forms in the trade union, mosque and temple.

II. Arthur Cipriani, the British Labour Party and East Indians

Trinidad was in a wake of economic depression that meant high unemployment, low wages and impoverished families. It was at this time that Afro-Caribbean workers who were employed as casual labourers in urban areas such as Port of Spain and in the oil fields, as well as East Indians who worked in the agricultural sectors were able to transcend ethnic divisions to engage in a working class struggle, primarily through the use of trade unions.

Amongst East Indians, two examples will serve well to explain their conditions. In the vicinity of St. James, Hosein Iman, a concerned citizen of the East Indian community, wrote to the *Labour Leader* that East Indians were at risk of losing their homes due to the increase in rental prices of the land. The younger generation had the good fortune of securing the houses built on the land built by their parents; however, landlords reserved the right to raise land rental fees and threatened to evict, or even burn down the houses if tenants did not

[24] *Ibid.* 12 January, 1929, 'F.E.M. Hosein, East Indians and Representative Government'.

have the money to pay for the land.[25] As well, an organized group of East Indian grass cutters, led by Raphael Rajcoomar and B. Moonsammy of River Road, St. Joseph,[26] appealed to local authorities to address their grievances. Company owners like Messrs. Bermudez Bros. who owned the Abbatoir, relied on grass cutters to supply their cattle with fodder. However, local farming authorities, with the blessing of the Department of Agriculture, offered to supply the grass at half the price that the grass cutters were demanding which put this group at a financial disadvantage. To their dismay, Acting Colonial Secretary Walcott refused to entertain these petitions.[27] The group of grass cutters convened a meeting at Friendly Society Hall in Woodbrook under the chairmanship of Cipriani and the TWA. There, speeches in Hindi were delivered by prominent East Indians.[28] From these two examples, one can see that East Indians, of their own volition, were taking ownership of addressing the problems facing their communities. This form of organization at the local level was strengthened by the fact that East Indian leaders used Hindi to inform their friends and other concerned colleagues of their problems and to show solidarity. Although English was the mark of literacy, the use of Hindi demonstrates how this cultural marker was politically used to bring East Indians together.

To strengthen the cause of all labourers in Trinidad, Cipriani sought a more permanent affiliation of the T.W.A. with the British Labour Party. Men such as Frederick Owen (F.O) Roberts, Benjamin Spoor and Sidney Webb (later Lord Passfield) turned their interests to colonial affairs. The British Labour Party was affiliated with groups like the Trades Union Congress (T.U.C) under the leadership of Walter Citrine; the Independent Labour Party

[25] *L.L.*,13 December, 1924, 'St. James and East Indian tenancy Hosein Iman'. N.A.T.T.
[26] *Ibid*. 30 August, 1924, 'East Indians Grass Cutter's Grievance'.
[27] *Ibid*. 27 August , 1924, 'Gov't Farm vs. Indian grass seller'.
[28] *Ibid.* 6 September, 192, 'Grass Cutter's Grievance'.

(I.L.P); the Social Democratic Federation, and the Fabian Society (1884).[29] Infused with socialist ideals, all these organizations sought to ameliorate the working class conditions in Britain. Their endeavours had a reciprocal effect on how labour was managed in both the metropole and the colonies. Organizations and members of the British Labour Party functioned as "think-tanks" to gather information from industries and about matters affecting the working classes. Hence, when the short-lived Labour governments of 1924 and 1929 were in power, labour conditions in East Africa, India and the West Indies became subjects of vital importance.

In 1925, Cipriani made the trip to England to participate in the British Labour and Commonwealth Conference. As the representative for Trinidad, he was touted as the champion of the working masses. In England, Cipriani was in the company of labour delegates from Canada, Australia and Great Britain. British Guiana's Hubert Critchlow, representative of the British Guiana Labour Union (B.G.L.U) was also present. As a representative of Trinidad and the greater West Indies, Cipriani advocated for the repeal of the Habitual Idler's Ordinance, the introduction of an eight-hour day, workmen's compensation, compulsory education, attention to the economic relationship between small cane farmers and manufacturers and the repeal of the Seditious Publications Ordinance. As well, Cipriani took the time to speak directly to the T.U.C. for the introduction of trade union laws, the Workman's Compensation Act and competitive examinations for the civil service.[30]

Cipriani's T.W.A. was vital in seeking redress for East Indian labourers. Branches of the T.W.A. were set up where there was a high concentration of East Indians in are such as

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[29] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (London, 1975), 5. See also Ron Ramdin, *From Chattel Slave Owner to Wage Earner*. *A History of Trade Unionism in Trinidad and Tobago* (London, 1982) and Marjorie Nicholson, *T.U.C. Overseas. The Roots of Policy* (London, 1986).

[30] Sahadeo Basdeo, *Labour Reform in Trinidad*, 58. Articles in the *Labour Leader*, July-August, 1925 followed Cipriani's time in London with great fervour. Cipriani's "Off to England Campaign" garnered many supporters from around the island. Odes were composed for Cipriani. For example one read: "Labour is worship-the robin is singing. Labour is worship-the wild bee is ringing. Listen: that eloquent whisper up-springing. Speaks to the soul out of nature's great heart. He that dwelleth in this secret place of the most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. With a heart for any fate. Still achieving, still pursuing. Learn to Labour and to wait."

Penal, Sangre Grande, Cedros, and most importantly in San Fernando.[31] Both Timothy Roodal and Sarran Teelucksingh, who were members of the E.I.N.C. endorsed Cipriani's commitment to labour in their campaigns in their election to the Legislative Council. Timothy Roodal's Labour Manifesto included items like poor relief, better housing, accommodation, reduction of taxes, the inspection on the export price of oil, competitive examinations for entry into the civil service, statutory eight hour days, labour bureaus, the repeal of Seditious Publication Ordinance, and the control of the government price of gasoline and retrenchment[32].


Being an Open Letter to the Working People of Trinidad

(By Arthur A Cipriani)

No. 1.

CAPT. THE HON. A. A. CIPRIANI.

Figure 10: Captain Arthur A. Cipriani. Source: The *Labour Leader*, 1, August, 1925.


MR. TIMOTHY ROODAL

Figure 11 : Timothy Roodal. Elected Member for the County of St. Patrick and representative of the T.W.A. Source: The *Labour Leader*, 21, January, 1928.

Cipriani and "rightwing" members of the BLP expressed sentiments of constitutionalism and moderation[33] to seek reform within the imperial framework. In 1926,

[31] *E.I.W.*,19 May, 1928, 'Sangre Grande T.W.A and Penal News'.
[32] *L.L.*, 21 January , 1928, 'Mr. Roodal's Labour Manifesto'.
[33] Basdeo, *Labour Reform in Trinidad*, 64

F.O. Roberts, a representative of the T.U.C. visited Trinidad and other parts of the West Indies to assess the conditions of labourers. In various speeches in Woodford Square that attracted mass gatherings, Roberts showed solidarity with the working masses by maintaining that the British Labour party was committed to fostering an understanding between the British Empire and the workers of the civilized world. For Roberts, the idea of a trade union was one of defence, not defiance. Disputes between employers, workers and managers should be resolved through negotiation, and anger and resentment between the two parties be quelled by engaging in dialogue.[34] He argued that trade unions in Great Britain should be consulted on problems facing workers in the West Indies. He also sought information of a reliable and authoritative character based on the political and social questions from various headquarters in the islandsto be given to the T.U.C. and the Labour Party. For Roberts, trade unions would legally safeguard worker's interests when it came to wages, working hours, employment insurance and compensation for work-related injuries. In addition, a trade union would act as a safety-valve to temper and prevent violent outbursts from the coloured working masses in the Empire who were frustrated with working conditions. Cipriani welcomed the suggestions of the T.U.C. and fully supported the Labour Party agenda. In looking to England for guidance, Cipriani also campaigned for child labour laws and compulsory education.[35]

By the late 1920's and early 1930's, the grim reality of global depression and stagnant financial markets fractured the commitment of the B.L.P to uplift the conditions of workers throughout the Empire. In the agricultural industries that focussed on sugar, cocoa and coconuts, nearly 76,000 labourers were employed of which East Indians formed the majority. 9,000 labourers worked on the oilfields.[36] Cane was grown partly by the sugar companies on

[34] *Ibid*.
[35] C.L.R. James, *The Life of Captain Cipriani. An account of British Government in the West Indies* (London, 1932), 65.
[36] BPP. XV, 1937-1938 (*Trinidad and Tobago Disturbances 1937 Report of the Commission)*, p.9.

their own estates and partly by peasant cane farmers. In 1929, there were over 18,000 cane farmers supplying almost 50% of the canes ground in the factories.[37]

Cipriani hoped that a relationship with the British authorities would help alleviate problems associated with the sugar industry. However, in practice, his decision had limited success. Answers to these difficulties rested with Britain's post World War I recovery plan that addressed the issue of unemployment. Unemployment in Britain stemmed from the fact that there was a lack of demand for British goods. Hence, colonial development was noted as the panacea of unemployment. Havinden and Meredith note that the "colonial empire might become an important source of orders."[38] Schemes such as the Colonial Development Fund (1929) favoured the needs of the British Crown where infrastructure like railways and mineral industries were funded by British authorities. In Trinidad, attention was given to the West Indian sugar industry. In 1929, Sydney Olivier (Baron Olivier of Ramsden), Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield), and other members of the Labour Party convened a commission to address the fate of the sugar industry in the West Indies. In 1928 alone, export revenue for sugar from Trinidad amounted to £1,230,547, followed by cocoa at £1,651,179, and oil at £2,493,290. [39] These figures reflect the fact that Trinidad's development of oil and minerals had proven to be lucrative. Still, Passfield agreed that Imperial preference be given to sugar produced in the West Indies, so that it would be given a fair chance in the world market. The sugar manufacturers of Trinidad led by E.A. Robinson and W.S. Clark, contended that production costs of sugar in Trinidad did not compare favourably with other Empire producers despite the fact the producers in the island were now faced with the extinction of the industry. The reason was that 90% of the sugar produced in the world was protected by tariffs, bounties and cartels. Trinidad had to export its entire output having no highly protected domestic market. Manufacturers claimed that if economic conditions did not

[37] BPP. VIII, 1929-1930(*Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission*), p. 109.
[38] Michael Havinden and David Meredith. *Colonialism and Development (*London, 1996), 140.
[39]BPP. VIII, 1929-1930 (*Report of the West Indian Sugar Commission),* p. 105.

improve, the sugar industry in the island, where over 100,000 or one-third of the population derived their income, would have to be abandoned. Passfield recognized the severity of the situation and suggested that preference should be given to reduce manufacturing costs and that factory output be improved. However, Passfield claimed that "it may not be found possible that all of the areas in which sugar is not produced, should continue in the cultivation of that crop, and that in some areas, the substitution of other crops may be necessary. I am confident that the help of the Colonial Development Fund will be liberally extended to support such measures to facilitate the substitution of other crops." [40] The recommendations as outlined by Olivier and Passfield favoured the financial side of the equation in aiding the sugar industry. However, the current policies disregarded the situation of the peasant labourers where issues of wages, contracts, work schedules, proper transportation of canes by the railways as well as uniform scales to diminish the cases of scale robbery were simply not addressed. This was the first example of disappointment with Cipriani's affiliation with the Labour Party.

The second blow to Cipriani's faith in the British Labour Party regarded the policies for trade union legislation. In 1932, Cipriani participated in the Second British Labour Party's Commonwealth Conference [41] where he had another chance to explain the conditions of workers in the West Indies. Cipriani remained adamant that a constitutional approach to remedy the problems facing the labouring masses was the solution. Passfield also advocated that trade unionism would be beneficial in alleviating industrial disputes. However, he cautioned that "trade unionism guided through constitutional channels would fall to leaders who had improper and mischievous ends."[42] The paternalistic long arm of the British

[40] Position of the Sugar Industry in Trinidad and British Guiana, 1929. Minute Lord Passfield. Financial returns for the cane industry between 1921-1928; 1921= £372 853, 1922,=£152 905, 1923=£ 178 266, 1924=£ 223321, 1925=£ 235 135, 1926=£ 177 183, 1927=£ 168 973 C.O.884/9/13. T.N.A/U.K.

[41] Basdeo, *Labour Reform in Trinidad*, 104.
[42] *Ibid.* 94

government grasped the colonial labour problems when the Trade Union Act was passed in 1932. This document gave colonial governments the right to register organizations that wished to become trade unions or refused to do so. However, it provided no immunities or safeguards for workers who wished to engage in peaceful picketing. It seemed that the colonial administration set out to ensure that the Legislative conditions introduced would frustrate and stifle the growth of trade unions.[43] Moreover, it was a tactic designed to safeguard the financial stability of important industries in the island, specifically sugar and oil. The semi -legality of trade unions prevented workers from organizing into unions for fear of being imprisoned for seditious activities. Indeed, Cipriani's faith in the Labour Party and its policies did not favour workers' conditions during the depression. Trade unions would open up channels for discussion, but as these debates were taking place, multinational companies increased their dividends and refused to pay adequate wages. Hence, workers in Trinidad had to devise their own modes of protest by organizing themselves in the workplace, and these activities would lay the foundations for the 1937 strikes.

Failures of representation amongst East Indian leaders could also be seen in 1925, when Kunwar Maharaj Singh who was Deputy Commissioner of the United Provinces visited Trinidad and British Guiana. Singh's visit to British Guiana occurred one year after the shooting of thirteen East Indian workers on the Riumveldt estate. His visit to Trinidad was informal, and he had no instructions from the Government of India. In Trinidad, he visited East Indian communities in Port of Spain and San Fernando. He had no doubt that Indians in Trinidad had prospered; over 100,000 acres of land had been bought by them as seen by the figures from the Director of Agriculture. Elaborate preparations were made for Singh as he was greeted by members of the Young East Indian party- a short- lived offshoot of the E.I.N.C. that included Reverend Lalla and F.E.M Hosein. Inside the reception hall, F.E.M.

[43]*Ibid.* 105, and also Albert Gomes, *Through A Maze of Colour* (Trinidad, 1974), 37.

Hosein praised the efforts of Singh and reminisced how they had spent time as law students at Middle Temple. Outside, destitute East Indians lined the streets carrying banners stating: "We Are Starving", "We have No Place to Sleep", "Send us Back to our Country". [44] However, elite East Indians prevented Singh from addressing the crowds by rationalizing how short his time was on the island, thus obscuring Singh's analysis of the situation. Singh did cite several problems that were prevalent in Trinidad including: inadequate employment in Government services; insufficient representation on public boards of committees; certain difficulties in connection with Indian marriages; inadequate representation on the legislative council and the want of a poor house for Indians in Port of Spain.[45] This impulse of East Indians to address their problems illustrated a lack of confidence they had in their leaders and this fervour had to be somehow channelled or addressed by successive leaders.

Singh's visit resonated with Trinidad's Afro-Trinidadian population. In the *Labour Leader*, a writer noted that the arrival of Singh in Port of Spain furnished a striking lesson on race consciousness and unity which the Negro element of this population would do well to learn:

> What is most remarkable about it all is that he is nevertheless an East Indian. He knows so and he feels so and he says so. He is proud of the fact, and in the almost unbounded racial pride which seems to absorb his soul, he exhibits an ardent love and consideration for all sort sorts and conditions for his fellow countrymen place and power notwithstanding. But while we deprecate the fact that there does not actually exist among the coloured people of this colony the same purpose and sentiment as is to be found among the same transplanted East Indians we cannot close our eyes to the fact that this characteristic among the latter section of the community is but the outgrowth of the conservation of the parent language which has in its enobling bonds the linguistic propriety that is bound to make for racial unity and consciousness. It was gratifying to note the superb ease and fluency with which Kunwar Maharaj Singh addressed himself to his hearers in a language of his adoption-The English ; and how at the conclusion of his scholarly oration he apostrophied and expressed his sentiments in his dear Mother Tongue. And it is just in this respect that those races or people which exist under British rule, and who have not

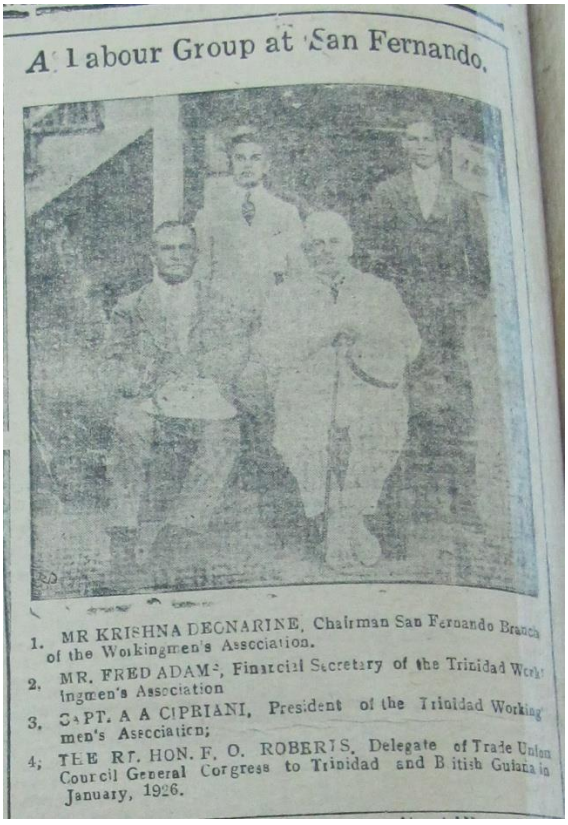
[44]Sanatan Dharma Pratindhi Sabha. Lahore, Indians in Trinidad. 1933 Dept. of Education Health and Lands,(E, H&L) Lands and Overseas Branch (L&O) Proceedings F-290-2. 1932. G.O.I./ N.A.I. As will be seen in the next chapter, information on East Indians in Trinidad supplied by the Sanatan Dharma Pratindhi Sabha in Lahore played an important role regarding the legalization of marriages in Trinidad. Information on the plight of East Indians in Trinidad documented in his report sparked not only the attention of this organization in Lahore but also to the Government of India and their administrative relationship with the Colonial and Indian offices in London. In this source, phrases were underlined.

[45] 'Indians in Trinidad', Report of Kunwar Maharaj Singh I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318. B.L.

> suffered themselves to be alienated from the native speech will forever appear to have more unity among them that is to be found among the descendants of the transplanted African[46]

At this moment, Afro-Trinidadians shared a common ground with East Indians. Vignettes of these instances illustrate that at a grassroots level, Trinidad's working masses were uniting and that elements of culture and ethnicity like language proved that there was respect and solidarity between the races.

III. Krishna Deonarine/Adrian Cola Rienzi and the Labour Movement (1925-1937)


A Labour Group at San Fernando.

1. MR KRISHNA DEONARINE, Chairman San Fernando Branch of the Workingmen's Association.
2. MR. FRED ADAMS, Financial Secretary of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association
3. CAPT. A A CIPRIANI, President of the Trinidad Workingmen's Association;
4. THE RT. HON. F. O. ROBERTS, Delegate of Trade Union Council General Congress to Trinidad and British Guiana in January, 1926.

Figure 12 : Meeting of the TWA Branch Port of Spain. Left to Right: Captain Cipriani, President of the TWA, Krishna Deonarine, Chairman of San Fernando TWA Branch, Mr. Fred Adam Financial Secretary of TWA and F.O. Roberts Delegate of T.U.C. to Trinidad and British Guiana. **Source: The *Labour Leader,* 18, September, 1926.**

Rapid mobilization of workers resulted in the failure of Cipriani's T.W.A. to be registered as a trade union. It was in this atmosphere that East Indian Krishna Deonarine later known as Adrian Cola Rienzi emerged as a respected labour leader who sought to capture the frustration of Trinidad's working masses. Deonarine was born in 1906 in the town of San

[46]Activities of Kunwar Maharaj Singh in Trinidad and British Guiana. 1925. (Extract from article in *L.L*., 23 May, 1925, 'Race Consciousness'), I.O.R L/E/7/1425. B.L.

Fernando, in the district of Victoria. His family worked on sugar plantations and owned a small roti shop. He was fortunate to attend Naparima College, but was unable to finish his studies.[47] In his teens, he was apprenticed as a clerk to a lawyer named Hobson on Harris Promenade in San Fernando. Hobson encouraged him to read and to continue studying for a legal profession.[48] During his public career, Deonarine changed his name to Adrian Cola Rienzi. He chose to name himself after Cola di Rienzi (1313-1354), an Italian activist and patriot, and Adrian after an English magistrate named Adrian Clarke who had spent long hours with the young Deonarine discussing political and economic affairs.[49] Through his writings, multiple affiliations with organizations in the London metropole which was the heart of British imperial control came to the fore, and, as a labour leader, Rienzi's political pragmatism represented a creolizing moment that harnessed the restlessness of youth in the colony. He moved with the nationalist sentiment for self-government in Trinidad without using either the racial identity of an East Indian or the legacy of indentureship to advocate for representation. Although at times he did fall back on that particular rhetoric to show solidarity with East Indian organizations, Rienzi capitalized on the strength of global labour movements for constitutional reform.

As a teenager, Deonarine was interested in Indian history and began to write in several serials. For example in the *Labour Leader* he published his thoughts on the Conquest of India in 1757 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857. Deonarine reflected on the incident known as the Black Hole of Calcutta in 1857. During the 1857 Indian Mutiny, Indian soldiers imprisoned English officers at Fort William. This story was subsequently used to denigrate the heroic struggles of Siraj ud-Daulah at the Battle of Plassey against the British East India

[47] Pamphlet on Adrian Cola Rienzi. Oilfields Workers and Factory Trade Union (O.W.T.U.) Archives. San Fernando,
[48] *Ibid.* 5
[49] Brinsley Samaroo, 'East Indian to West Indian The Public Career of Adrian Cola Rienzi', *Occasional Paper Series*, 2 (Trinidad, 2006), 3.

Company. To him, the story had been used time and time again to expose the essential cruelty and barbarity of the Indian people. By reading Bengali scholar Babu Akshaya Kumar Maitra, Deonarine was pleased to learn that the story was a "myth invented by British historians to create prejudice against Sirajudowla". According to Maitra, the Black Hole incident did actually occur in Amritsar where in 1857, sepoy soldiers were imprisoned and shot by English soldiers for inciting mutiny and disorder.[50] This article by Deonarine is important because it expresses his interest in Indian ancestral history, and also gives a sense of how he related history to present political conditions.

From a young age, Deonarine was interested in political matters, so he frequented meetings hosted by various leaders in the East Indian community. In 1925, at a large gathering in Grant (Oriental) Hall in San Fernando, he argued that the Governor should appoint a member of the East Indian race to sit on the Legislative Council as East Indians provided labour for the colony and were loyal servants to the Crown.[51] Deonarine soon sought affiliations with members that included the Rate Payer's Association who were instrumental in the water riots in 1903.[52] However, in the early days of his career as a labour leader, his most important role was as a member of Arthur Cipriani's T.W.A. where he expressed solidarity with the labour socialist movement to repeal the Seditions Publications Ordinance.

Deonarine soon became frustrated with Cipriani's constitutional approach and broke away from the party. Initial signs of his disillusionment appeared when he wrote to the *Trinidad Guardian* deploring the decision of the Trinidad government to refuse Marcus Garvey entry into Port of Spain.[53] As well, he utilized Boy Scout groups based in Naparima

[50] *L.L.,* 25, November, 1925, 'Black Hole of Calcutta, English version a myth'; see also Partha Chatterjee, *The Black Hole of Empire: A History of a Global Practice of Power* (Princeton, 2012) for how the story of Siraj-ud-daulah and the Battle of Plassey has been appropriated.
[51] *The East Indian Patriot,* 1925, ' Meetings of the East Indian community'.
[52] *L.L.,* 7 April, 1926, 'Mass gathering'.
[53] *Ibid.* 24 December, 1927, 'Krishna Deonarine hits back'.

College to form the Young Socialist League, which, in turn formed the basis for young male teenagers who wished to be part of the T.W.A. San Fernando Branch. It was to be modelled after the Labour Guild of Youths which was the recruiting ground for the British Labour Party. After an encounter with Deonarine, Governor Horace Byatt wrote he was "youthful and ready for violent political views."[54] However, the Colonial authorities kept him under surveillance for alleged communist activities after a telegraph was intercepted by the West Indian Panama Telegraph Company. He had pledged support for Soviet workers in Russia, and stated that the people of Trinidad were united with workers in Russia in the struggle for world socialism. Also, he was accused of spreading seditious views that were of an anti-British character. Furthermore, Deonarine wanted to pass a resolution for the EINC to affiliate itself with the British Labour Party and the Third International.[55] Governor Byatt wrote that Deonarine's efforts should not be taken seriously, for while he was working on behalf of the T.W.A. in San Fernando, he was also on the path of splitting the San Fernando branch from the T.W.A, since the T.W.A. base in Port of Spain wished to repudiate him. [56] While Deonarine's efforts were a cause for concern, despatches from the Colonial Office indicated that his views were not taken seriously by other East Indians. Seemingly "radical" breakaways from the T.W.A. such as Deonarine mirrored the decisions of former Afro-Caribbean members of T.W.A. who preferred to work outside Cipriani's party to mobilize a working-class struggle

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, both the E.I.N.C. and E.I.N.A. were losing ground in their quest to mobilize the East Indian working classes. In 1928, Rienzi, alongside James Mungal created the Indian National Party (I.N.P.). At this moment, India's quest for home rule captured the attention of East Indians in the West Indies. Each Indian organization at this time used the battle of their ancestral homeland, but in different ways, to maintain a sense of

[54] 'Activities of Krishna Deonarine', 1928. C.O 295/563/1.T.N.A/U.K. and I.O.R. L/P&J/8/318.
[55] *Ibid*
[56] *Ibid*.

solidarity with the East Indian masses. As for Rienzi, he appealed to all East Indian youths in Trinidad to wake up to the struggle for freedom that was going on in India. He called on young men and women to affiliate themselves with Indians living in London, Berlin, and New York.[57] He wanted people to deliver lectures, pamphlets, and issue manifestos, and above all, to become educated on current events both at home and abroad. Rienzi felt that the E.I.N.C. was a dormant, inactive body that had a narrow outlook and refused to look forward to what was happening in the world. He claimed "that the psychological moment is drawing nigh when our status in the world is going to be determined."[58] He read about youths of various countries in open revolt against their rulers. Organizations such as the Young Fascist Movement in Italy, the Young Socialist League in the Soviet Union, the Anti-Imperialist Movement in China, the All India Students Associations in London and the young Irishmen standing up for Home Rule in Ireland, all fascinated him. He called for a Bharat Yuwak Saughs (Order of Young India) to be established in Trinidad, so that Trinidadian youths would be aware of events in India. Trinidad would be a part of a global network of societies that disseminated first-hand information in connection with the Indian freedom struggle. Rienzi maintained that through lectures, pamphlets and manifestos, East Indians in Trinidad could put forth their own ideas to "do other lawful and constitutional things to bring about self-government in the West Indies."[59] The struggle for self-government in Trinidad and the greater West Indies was part of a wider movement for a shift in the balance of power in the global order. While Rienzi may have used India's example as a compass to give directions to these movements, he felt that a tangible and "present" connection would enable the political momentum for self-government in Trinidad which had so much in common with other global movements.

[57] *E.I.W.*, 29 July, 1929, 'Trinidad Indians Awake!'
[58] *Ibid*. 16, February , 1929, 'Call to Indian Youths. Organize, Educate and Agitate'.
[59] *Ibid.*

His ideas were put into practice when he publicly argued against members of the E.I.N.C. or those who shared the organization's values. Two men of note were F.E.M. Hosein and Seepersad Naipaul (1906-1953), father of Trinidad's famous novelist V.S. Naipaul. To Rienzi, members of the EINC had reached the winter of their days. In an opening address to the East Indian Literary Debating Society, F.E.M. Hosein urged cultural institutions in Trinidad to learn Hindi and Urdu to preserve the pride and purity of the race. Hosein's statements were bolstered by visits of Indian religious leaders like Pundit Mehta Jaimini, emissary of the Arya Samaj movement who gave public lectures on the merits of learning the Hindu Vedas. His visit would have a great influence on the development of the Hindu Mahasabha in Trinidad. As descendants of indentured labourers, they had to keep alive the customs of the Arya Varta to keep the Indian race distinct and proud.[60] Naipaul preferred to glorify the contributions that East Indians made to the "Sunshine Isle" in electing to leave glorious India by signing the indentured contract.[61] More importantly, he argued that cases of miscegenation- either of unions between East Indians and Afro-Trinidadians, or Europeans stained the character of the Indian in the West Indies. In Rienzi's reply to Naipaul's article, he surmised he was scared to "death that Indians would lose their identity."[62] . Rienzi contended "that there was nothing demoralising in a union between and Indian, European, or a Negro or a Chinese. Rather every race had its own history, its own culture, its own inheritance and its own civilization."[63] He further accused Naipaul of entreating every descendant of India to retreat to her past.[64] To Rienzi, Naipaul, like Hosein, was living on the dead past; present circumstances dictated that East Indians look to the future and to acknowledge that Indians all

[60] *E.I.W.*, 20, October, 1928 'Problems of the Future by F.E.M Hosein'.
[61] *Ibid.* 15 June , 1929, 'The Conditions of Indians in Trinidad'. Seepersad Naipaul also wrote for the *Trinidad Guardian* on Affairs of Indians in Trinidad. Notable articles in the *Trinidad Guardian* included 'A survey of temples in Trinidad', 6 December , 1934
[62] *Ibid.* 4 December, 1929, 'Indians and Modernity by Adrian Rienzi'. See Patrick French, *The World is What it Is. The Authourized Biography of V.S. Naipaul* (Toronto, 2008), 18.

[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Ibid.*

over had little to be proud of while the Motherland was being denied the right to determination. Rienzi claimed that it was useless to depend upon the E.I.N.C. or the E.I.N.A.; these organizations lacked the soul and the courage to go forward and were content with their past achievement and preferred to pass aimless resolutions. "The only thing Indian in us is our blood but through enlightened public opinion she will take her rightful place amongst the Commonwealth. Isn't it time Indians in Trinidad fall in the same lines?"[65] The collective consciousness of Indians in the diaspora that took into account the past, present and future of India, all gave these leaders the strength to ensure that the rights of East Indians were recognized. Simultaneously, one faction looked to India's ancient culture and traditions to maintain the strength of the race, but was inert to the present conditions of Trinidadian society. The other sought to mobilize the East Indian masses by embracing the multicultural nature of Trinidadian society and used the present conditions of the Indian freedom struggle as thrust to pressure the colonial administration for self-government.

[65] *Ibid*. 12 January, 1929, 'Gesture for consolidation and cooperation'.

IV. Activities of the Indian National Party (I.N.P)

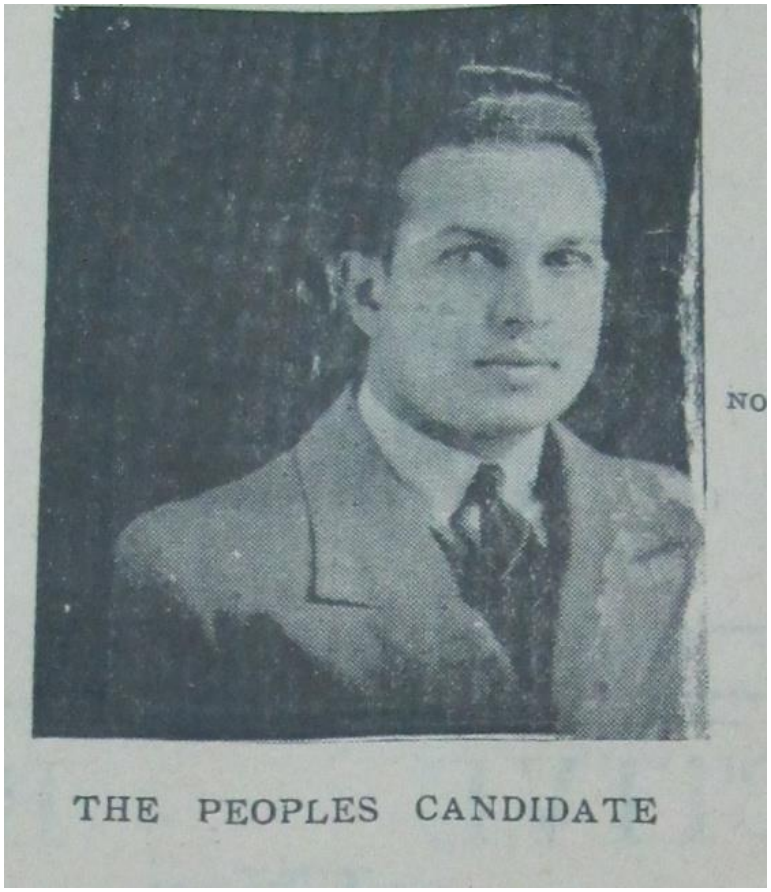


Figure 13: Adrian Cola Rienzi, Elected member for the County of Victoria and President of the O.W.T.U. and A.S.E.F.W.T.U., 1938. Source: *The People*, 8, January, 1938

Some of Rienzi's ideas were put into practice by his Indian National Party when he sought to address the problem of poverty amongst East Indians in Trinidad since destitution renewed the wish of some to repatriate to India. In the past, people such as Mohammed Orfy and his E.I.D.L, had petitioned the government to fulfil its promise of return passages under the system of indentureship. Those East Indians who repatriated back to India of their own accord petitioned the Indian government to intervene on behalf of their countrymen back in Trinidad who suffered from repressive conditions. These individuals utilized their efforts by printing an article in the *Pioneer Mail* (an Indian newspaper), on the conditions of East Indians in Trinidad. Headlines read: "Large Batches of Repatriated Workmen are in Harrowing Conditions"; "Indians are compelled to stay in the colony against their will; no official and unofficial member to look after Indian interests even though the Protector of

Immigrants was mandated to do so"; "Workers Not allowed to see Kunwar Maharaj Singh" and "Plantation owners Discarded their old Workers."[66] These series of articles attracted the attention of the authorities in England and India. The Protector of Immigrants Arnold de Boissière counteracted these allegations by illustrating that through his Annual reports, East Indians in Trinidad owned many acres of Crown land and many had small houses. In fact, many were leading lawyers, merchants and thriving shopkeepers. Most importantly, they were better off than Indians on the subcontinent.[67]

Given this sense of restlessness amongst East Indians, Rienzi and the I.N.P. suggested a solution to Governor Byatt that a night shelter be built in San Fernando. It was prudent for the government to utilize the £30 repatriation fee to build a night shelter for those who were destitute. Rienzi argued that between 1918 and 1928, only 9,000 East Indian had repatriated to India. Having crossed the "black waters", they were considered outcasts. They had become accustomed to the West Indies climate, were unable to live in India and became a burden to the Indian government.[68] Byatt refused to receive the deputation; he accused Deonarine as being notoriously seditious and claimed that the I.N.P. was a radical break away from the E.I.N.C. or E.I.N.A. and made up of sheep- like followers. To further strengthen his case, Rienzi fell back on the language of imperial citizenship by stating that Byatt's indifference to the night shelter was a slight on "His majesty's most loyal subjects whose labour brought prosperity to the colony."[69] Moreover, Rienzi confirmed that the shelter was open to all in the area who were destitute.

Although we do not have evidence to trace the decision to open the night shelter to all of Trinidad's working masses, it does illustrate Rienzi's pragmatism that communalist

[66] 'Indians in Trinidad', C.O. 295/564/10. T.N.A/U.K. See also, 'Indians in Trinidad', 1921-1930 I.O.R. L/E/7/1283.B.L.

[67] *Ibid*.
[68] *E.I.W.*, 18 August, 1928, 'Indian National Party'.
[69] 'Indian National Party and the construction of an Indian Night shelter', 1928. C.O 295/565/10. T.N.A./U.K.

politics, as practised by his East Indian compatriots, was not conducive to providing solutions for East Indians living in a Creole society. By pooling efforts into raising issues to curb poverty amongst East Indians, Rienzi's platform was coached in terms of remedying problems for all people in Trinidad. Improvements in class and social standing were a common cause for all workers. In fact, Byatt's reservations about the night shelter illustrate how he perceived Rienzi's tactics. He wrote:

> I dealt with this organization which is under leadership of a few malcontents, who I fear are more concerned with creating class consciousness and discontent than with the welfare of the poor...The new house of refuge which is now in course of construction is intended for all classes irrespective of race or religion, as is well known throughout the colony, but it is rather interesting to observe that all references to this fact were carefully omitted at a subsequent part of the meeting when my reply was discussed. I need hardly say that Government support of a proposal to erect a night shelter for East Indians would naturally invite criticism and objection by other sections of the community.[70]

Again, Rienzi's decision on the night shelter acknowledges his idea that East Indians needed to come to terms with the present conditions of their society. Also, he was careful to not alienate his East Indian comrades by disregarding their Indian heritage. He later requested the presence of an Indian commissioner. He had read about the tour Srinivasa Sastri had taken throughout the Dominions where Indians resided.[71] Sastri's efforts resulted in the Government of India becoming aware of the difficulties facing Indians living in various parts of the Empire. Sastri argued that the rights of Indians as citizens of the Empire were not being upheld. By changing the petition and asking for an Indian commissioner, Rienzi was able to work on behalf of all Trinidadians without alienating the East Indian faction. What set him apart from the organizations led by F.E.M. Hosein, Sarran Teelucksingh and Reverend Lalla was that he actively identified the needs and aspirations of third generation East Indians in Trinidad. He aligned their senses to global anti-colonial movements, especially in India without alienating the other races in Trinidad.

[70] Governor Horace Byatt of Trinidad to Leo Amery C.O., 1928. CO 295/565/10. T.N.A./U.K.
[71] Sastri had made a tour of Indians in the Dominions and especially capitalized on the plight on Indians in Canada during the Komagata Maru incident in British Columbia, Canada where a group of Indians from Punjab had been denied entry.

V. Adrian Rienzi and the League Against Imperialism. (L.A.I.) (1930-1934)

Rienzi sought to continue his legal studies, and, in 1930, he left Trinidad for Ireland to gain his law degree from the University of Dublin. Whilst there, he was drawn into circles that supported Indian nationalism and the quest for India to separate itself from the British Empire. In Dublin, Ireland, he joined L.A.I. Branch. The L.A.I. was an international organization that had been formed in 1927; it was made up of dedicated individuals and organizations that supported the mobilization of working-class labourers. In a meeting in Brussels, twenty-six organizations representing nationalist or working-class movements from Korea to South America gathered to promote global solidarity to remedy problems facing-working class labourers. They wanted to form a united front against British imperialist schemes. One member stated: "The British Empire is based on economic greed ... workers and peasants must unite, first to destroy the evil system of oppression, and then to rebuild as the Soviet Union is being built up today."[72] LAI spokespersons emphasized "economic emancipation and internationalism. There was a necessity for a proletarian movement, conscious of its unity with working classes everywhere and moving forward to economic as well as political freedom."[73] The League wanted to utilize human resources to penetrate colonial systems. They called for more intensive work in all branches of trade unions, cooperatives, and in particular, the factories, mines and transport services. Attention was to be paid to opposing imperialist propaganda in the schools; events such as Empire Day and other imperialist demonstrations had to be eliminated. Predictably, their international activity and the socialist agenda of the L.A.I. came under suspicion.

[72] 'Fight against Imperialism', National Conference of the British Section of the League Against Imperialism held at Black Friar's Hall, 1931, I.O.R. L/P&J/12/270. B.L.
[73] *Ibid.*

The L.A.I. served as a leading nexus of information about nationalist struggles.[74] In the Irish propaganda newspaper, *An Phoblacht*, Rienzi's name appeared in the headlines stating that thousands attended a monster "Aericheact Mor" on the slopes of Lough Lane near Collinstown to meet him. He brought greetings from 350 million of his countrymen engaged in a life and death struggle to free India and to liberate other downtrodden nations.[75]

Rienzi's time with the LAI gave him the practical experience as well as the intellectual tools to form trade unions in Trinidad. It must be noted that Mitra Gokali (M.G.) Sinanan, who had attended Middle Temple Law School in London, also found himself in the company of Indian nationalists. While at the Indian Students Hostel on Gower Street, some students formed the Central Association for Indians Abroad. There, Sinanan found solidarity with Gandhi's Civil Disobedience campaign and congratulated Gandhi on being arrested on purpose. Sinanan condemned the actions of the British government and pledged support for Gandhi. Often, military intelligence would find its way to students in the hostel. Reports on the hostel indicated that a few students were in contact with revolutionaries in India who arranged certain activities in various parts of the country in such a way that if troops were moved to any particular part to quell rebellion, the local Congress leader about 200 miles distant would be immediately informed to start trouble in his own locality.[76] Sinanan was in the company of notable people such as V. K. Krishna Menon,[77] who also studied law at Middle Temple, and was a member part of the Labour Party. Often Sinanan would be responsible for calling meetings, circulating material and financial support for the organizations. Rienzi followed suit by joining associations in London like the "Friends of

[74] L.A.I.. Extract from the *New Leader*, 'The Coloured Peoples', 1927 File 13-14. I.O.R L/P&J/12/267. B.L.
[75] Kate O'Malley 'The League Against Imperialism, British, Irish and Indian connections', Communist History Network Online Newsletter, 14 (2003). http://www.socialsciences.manchester.ac.uk/chnn/CHNN14LAI.html. accessed 4, December, 2013. For more literature on the activities of the L.A.I. in Britain and their members in the interwar period please see Susan Pennybacker *From Scottborro to Munich Race and Political Culture in 1930's*.(Princeton, 2009). In particular she gives detail on the activities of both George Padmore and Shapurji Saklatvala.
[76] Indian Students Hostel. Extracts from New Scotland Yard Reports. 1929-1930.I.O.R. L/P&J/12/42. B.L.
[77] Activities of Central Association of Indians Abroad. 1929-1930. I.O.R. L/P&J/12/405 B.L.

India Association" based on the Strand where he met with Mitra Sinanan and other Indians who were concerned about Britain's presence in India.[78]

It was in the L.A.I, based in London that Rienzi found a place where his political ideals and aspirations were made real and acknowledged. As a member of this organization, he learned about the havoc that British imperialist schemes had wrought in countries like Trinidad. As a result, he learned how to consolidate networks and to exchange the League's ideas with these intellectuals by distributing propaganda for them. The League did not discriminate against race; in fact, Rienzi interfaced on terms of equality with people such as James Maxton, a key participant in the League and a strong opponent of Britain's imperialist policies who was the Labour M.P for Bridgeton, Glasgow and head of the Independent Labour Party, (ILP).[79] Maxton, like other members of the League that comprised of people who were British and non-British, leaned toward the left. When the Labour government was in power in 1929, Maxton highlighted deplorable working conditions amongst West Indian labourers especially on the sugar estates. He argued that anachronistic labour legislation restricted the mobility of workers.[80] The LAI wanted to rally all anti-imperialist forces in Britain behind the banner of complete independence for colonial and semi-colonial countries and, the linking of the anti-imperial movement on an international scale. While Roodal and Cipriani allied themselves with right wing members of the B.L.P., Rienzi became affiliated with organizations that comprised of people like Maxton who leaned on the left wing of British politics.

Rienzi sought to make a direct connection between the L.A.I. and a few East Indian leaders back in Trinidad. However, his efforts were thwarted by colonial officials who intercepted the material he had written. Reports on the L.A.I. accused him of sending propaganda material by the L.A.I. to C.B. Mathura who tried to gain membership in the

[78] Friends of India Association. Extract from New Scotland Yard Reports. I.O.R. L/P&J/12/428.
[79] Oxaal, *Black Intellectuals*, 69.
[80] Basdeo, *Labour Reform in Trinidad*, 84.

League. Mathura was anxious to start a periodical for sympathisers in Trinidad and British Guiana, and hoped that Rienzi would have been be able to get support from the L.A.I. Rienzi was even willing to arrange for the purchase of a suitable printing press second-hand.[81]Although, his efforts did not succeed, his attempt illustrates that by establishing a method of communication for L.A.I., material broadened the scope and a space for East Indians to voice their problems. More importantly, Rienzi was establishing a global network of groups who shared similar problems with Trinidadian labourers. The colonial administration was right to be wary of his activities because through the connective framework of the L.A.I, he could have started the process whereby Trinidad masses would rise up.

One of the items on the agenda of the L.A.I. was the liberation of all Negro workers. The International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) had a significant presence in the League. This organization was important to Pan-African networks and was led by the black West Indian intellectual George Padmore (Trinidadian born as Malcolm Nurse). Members included Arnold Ward. This League was a component of the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U), itself a response to the Comintern's recognition of the specific problem of blacks around the world.[82] Whilst in the league, the I.T.U.C.N.W. contested that throughout the U.S.A., Africa, West Indies and Great Britain, Negro workers and peasants were being attacked more ferociously than ever before by white imperialists. In

[81] *Ibid*. 121-123. Rienzi and Mathura were successful in this endeavour. Before his time in London, Mathura and Rienzi would often hold mass meetings for East Indians in the Oriental Cafe on Charlotte St. in Port of Spain. *E.I.W*, 29, December, 1929, 'Mass meeting'.
In 1931 while Rienzi was in London an article appeared in the East India Weekly on the Scottsboro Trial where nine black boys were accused of raping a white girl in Alabama. The case highlighted racism in the United States as the right to a fair trial was denied to black youths. The Scottsboro trial was another rallying point for Pan-African networks. During his time in the L.A.I, Arnold Ward was drawn this case where he urged fellow members for their support. See *E.I.W.*, 10, November, 1931, 'Letter from London'. Lastly, Rienzi also contributed to *The Beacon*. His article 'Communism or Chaos', appeared in *The Beacon* in 1932. Rienzi demonstrated how far left his political ideals had become. He boldly stated that the salvation of those masses living in the colonies rested with the dismantling of capitalist systems. Only the dictatorship of the working classes guided by revolutionary determination and socialist philosophy could bring about a new world order.
[82] Rhoda Reddock, *Elma Francois and the NWCSA and the worker's struggle for change in the Caribbean* (London, 1988), 13.

the U.S.A., the imperialists resorted to lynching; in the West Indies, to intensified exploitations; in Africa to increased taxes, more repressive legislation and to segregation, and in Britain to the colour bar restrictions and threats of mass deportation. The League desired the complete independence from imperialism in whatever country Negro workers resided. This was the only method of freeing black workers and peasants from capitalist exploitation with all its colour bar restrictions, slavery and other atrocities. The Conference's pledge ran as follows:

> To work for the class cooperation of all British workers with Negro workers and peasants and for the unity of all black and white work in the struggle against capitalism on the basis of immediate demands which make no distinction of colour, race or gender.
> To fight for the breaking down of all colour bar restrictions in Britain and in particular for the right of coloured workers to become members of trade unions and other working class organisations on equal basis for white workers.
> To fight against the Aliens Registration scheme of coloured Seamen whereby Negroes and being threatened with deportation.[83]

Inspired by the activities of the I.T.U.C.N.W. it was reported that Adrian Cola Rienzi had counted on representing all of the interests of workers in the West Indies. He was noted as being enthusiastic in pledging his support with all Negro workers.[84]Although Rienzi was East Indian in appearance, he did not let his racial identity dictate his political agenda.

Any material that was considered seditious or had the potential to incite rebellion was intercepted by the colonial authorities. Rienzi struck up a friendship with Padmore and took it upon himself to seek out or relay information to the L.A.I. on the conditions of those oppressed in the colonies. For example, he read letters by Padmore which dealt with the development of the Negro Worker's Welfare Association (N.W.A.) in America, Africa, and the West Indies. The "Negro workers [have] no time for pacifism. They are growing more and more militant. The pacifist doctrines of missionaries cut no ice with them. They believe in going and getting a gun."[85]He also informed members that a "British Commission was

[83] L.A.I. British Section. 1931. I.O.R L/P&J/12/270. B.L.
[84] *Ibid.*
[85]. L.A.I. 2nd International Conference. Extract from Scotland Yard.1932. I.O.R L/P&J/12/272 File 59.

proceeding to the West Indies in Autumn which the natives were preparing to boycott. He further reiterated that there was every prospect of first class rising in the West Indies against British oppression."[86] Not only did Rienzi read statements, but he analyzed the economic interests in the West Indies and its vital importance to the British Empire. Since it was one of the League's tenets to combat imperialist economic policies, Rienzi educated League members by informing them that the British Royal Navy drew most of the oil from warships from Trinidad and that it would be very easy to stop the supply.[87]

While active in the League, Rienzi still continued to work on behalf of the T.W.A. Captain Cipriani informed Rienzi that the Colonial government operating in Trinidad had blocked information from the I.T.U.C.N.W. Rienzi stated that particular bulletins from James E. Welch in Washington, and correspondence exchanged between James Maxton and in the I.T.U.C.N.W. in Hamburg, had been stopped from reaching its intended readers.[88] In sympathy with these lost endeavours, Rienzi circulated material from the I.T.U.C.N.W. Members of the I.T.U.C.N.W stated "that an only part of the Empire where the Negro Worker was allowed to circulate was where there were no Negroes."[89] By cooperating with black intellectuals, Rienzi proved that neither race nor religion had a place when it came to the liberation of working class labourers. He preferred to create networks with individuals who believed in the liberation of all countries from imperialist rule.

Rienzi allied himself with Shapurji Saklatvala, the M.P for Battersea Park, who was a representative of the Indian National Congress and a noted supporter of Communism. Saklatvala helped him create his own organization called the New Indian Political Group which was a subgroup of the L.A.I. He held private meetings at Bogey's bar on Upper

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[86] *Ibid.*
[87] *Ibid*.
[88] L.A.I. 2nd International Conference. Extract from Scotland Yard, 1932. I.O.R L/PJ/272 File 78.
[89] *Ibid.*

Woburn Place in London. There, Rienzi stressed that India's struggle with the Empire must be seen in the larger context of freeing the labouring classes from the grip of economic oppression. The New Indian Political Group stated that more radical measures had to be taken to aid Indian nationalists. Rienzi denounced Gandhi's tactics in appeasing relations between Britain and India, and supported Subhas Chandra Bose's plan for India to be an independent nation. Bose was a Bengali dissident of the Indian National Congress who expressed hostility towards leadership of the Congress. In fact, Bose made a bid for central power against Gandhi in 1939.[90] It illustrates how the different strategies Indians took in their endeavour to gain equality with the British Empire had a direct influence on how East Indians in Trinidad were dealing with the colonial administration. Rienzi took it upon himself to distribute copies of a speech made by Bose in 1933 that was banned from publication. An extract from his speech read that "for the attainment of freedom two paths are open to us. One is the path of uncompromising militancy. The other is the path of compromise. If we follow the first path, the fight for liberty will have to be pursued till we are able to wrest political power in its entirety and there can be no question of a compromise along the road to political freedom. If on the other hand, we follow the second path, periodical compromises may have to be made with our opponents for consolidating our position before any further attempts are made."[91]

Rienzi and others denounced the fact that Gandhi had compromised with the Empire when India was given Dominion status. India may have been on equal terms with Britain, but still part of its Empire. Rienzi demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners, the withdrawal of the entire British armed forces and all British civilian officers from India, and the payment of due compensation in return for the exploitation of India's wealth:

> Some foolish Indian politicians thought that India would be happy as a Dominion within the so called Commonwealth, but they did not realise that the British government

[90] Judith Brown, *Modern India and the Origins of Asian Democracy* (Oxford, 1985), 295.
[91] The Presidential Speech of Subhas Bose 1933. IOR L/P&J/12/372 File 30. B.L.

> would never allow India to be an equal partner is the State. India's salvation lay outside of the Empire; if India were to leave it, the Empire would commence to disintegrate.[92]

He drew similarities between India's struggle for independence with that of Russia; like India, Russia was a vast territory made up of many languages, and yet it was able to form a singular nation where labour was paramount. India had to take the lead from the workers of Russia and cooperate with the working class in England towards this end.[93] To Rienzi, Gandhi was the personal confidant of the Empire. In his mind, Gandhi had a vision of India that was ancient, romantic and completely different from the reality of the conditions India's masses laboured under. In a meeting of the New Indian Political Group, Rienzi exclaimed that "all the peasants and workers would as one man, rise against the British in India when the next war came."[94] In his opinion, India had to engage the Empire with more militant means.

In order to fight the Empire, Rienzi stressed that all Indians, both young and old, and from all parts of the world had to come together to mobilize support for India's complete independence outside the Empire. He held private meetings to discuss methods and more importantly held debates on the significance of the movement. As a group leader, he deplored organizations that fostered Indian communalism. In fact, newly formed groups like the India League of Friends of India did not recognize the plight of Negro workers; however, Rienzi stuck to the founding tenets of the L.A.I. by vehemently expressing his belief that both Indian nationalists and Negro workers shared the same goal of defeating the Empire and strengthening the voice of working class labourers. In one meeting of the New Indian Political group, Rienzi invited members of the Negro Welfare Association (N.W.A), the Anti Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, and the International Institute of African

[92] *Ibid*. Meeting of New Indian Political Party, , 1933 File 66. These statements of Rienzi's reflect his earlier writings. He wrote an article for the *E.I.W.*, 29 November, 1929, 'Is Britain Sincere?.'Rienzi argued that India's gaining Dominion Status was but a stalling tactic that further dragged India down to a dungeon and servile status of the British Empire.
[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid*. Meeting of New Indian Political Party .I.O.R. L/P&J/12/272 File 85. B.L.

Languages and Culture in hopes that the two organizations would collaborate in combating the "machinations" of British imperialists. Both Arnold Ward and C.L.R. James were in attendance.[95] Communalism based on racial exclusivist characteristics had no place in defeating the Empire.

VI. Upheaval in Trinidad 1934-1937

The 1934 unrest was the physical manifestation of Rienzi's battle cry for East Indians to become involved in activities to foster political change following the disappointments with Cipriani. In addition, it was an expression of dissatisfaction with the EINC which had become a politically inert entity whose constitutional approach had failed to bring about substantial legislative change. East Indians took it upon themselves to pressure the colonial government to improve working conditions. In terms of leadership, M.G. Sinanan was noted for his curiosity regarding the collection of evidence during the strikes. In the report, photographs were taken of the damages on the estates. When Sinanan asked for the photographs, he was told that it was privileged information and that these items were not in the hands of the Trinidad government. Sinanan found this reply unacceptable. He was further noted for his break with Cipriani and his dissatisfaction with the efficiency of the Legislature in terms of its representing the interests of East Indians.[96] This refusal by the colonial authorities to let Sinanan have access to the evidence or even present new information only strengthened the will to find new avenues of representation outside the colonial framework.

[95] *Ibid.* Rienzi and members of his new group held debates that included: Are Parliamentary systems really democratic in operation?
Do the Industrial and Agricultural masses obtain control over their affairs by a vote at General elections?
If western parliaments are really controlled day after day by Industrial and Financial interests of the country, what would be the state of parliamentary institutions in India, where industrial and financial control is very largely British?
What would be the most suitable from of an all India government for an Independent India outside the British Empire?
What would the effective from of organizations in India to secure separation from British Empire?
Can capitalism even function in exploited and drained countries like India when it fails to function comparatively richer countries?
What are the true economic interests of British Imperialism in India?

[96] *Ibid.*

In light of the 1934 disturbances and the growing discontent amongst East Indians, British authorities recognized that some gesture towards this group had to be shown so that they could remain confident that their concerns were being looked after by their rulers. In 1935, the Trinidad authorities, with the support of the British government called for a commission to investigate the dietary and constitutional conditions of East Indians. The authors of the report acknowledged that the survey was not exhaustive, but that the families visited on the estates gave an accurate representation of the typical East Indian labourer's health.[97] The estates chosen were Brechin Castle, Woodford Lodge, Waterloo, Esperanza and Madeleine St.Usine. [98] Medical officers found that many labourers were suffering from a crippling chest condition, and shortness of breath. They wrote that "their chest is more or less barrel shaped according to the stage of the disease."[99] As well, "in advanced cases, the ribs were pronounced and pushed forward and the chest was fixed in an exaggerated position so that in spite of marked aspiratory efforts, little movement of the chest wall can be detected."[100]

According to the investigating medical officers, diseases were attributed to the lack of a proper diet, especially on account on the community's customs and traditions. Malnutrition was attributed to a large amount of starch, from the rice and flour that dominated the East Indian diet, and there was a lack of fresh vegetables, animal fat and milk.[101] The officers concluded that "the only prospect of improvement lies in education to wean Indians from their present outlook on life. So long as they stick to their crippling customs, no radical improvement can be affected in their health physique."[102] While the investigation and

[97] Survey of the Dietary and Constitutional Position of East Indian labourers. 1935. CO 295/594/13. T.N.A/U.K.
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Ibid*.
[100] *Ibid.*
[101] *Ibid.*

[102] *Ibid.*

description of the physical conditions of East Indian labourers was carried out in detail, no medical analysis was made of the housing conditions which contributed to their poor health. They acknowledged that the barrack system of housing was acknowledged as bad, but deemed unworthy to consider the issue in more detail.[103] In sum, the East Indians themselves were blamed for their poverty and their customs and traditions were the chief culprits behind their persistent health problems.

Commissions such as this bore resemblance to the Royal Commission of 1910, the Chimman Lal and McNeil report of 1915, and the report of the labour disturbances of 1934. Each assessed the conditions of Indians in the Crown colonies. The emerging pattern in these reports was that all used labour as a lens to judge the overall quality of life of East Indians in Trinidad. Ownership of Crown land, East Indians in the professional classes, success of schooling via the Canadian missionaries served as positive indicators for settlement. But all failed to acknowledge that the lack of political representation to enable proper infrastructure in workplace conditions was lacking. These reports further relegated East Indians to the periphery of Trinidadian society despite the fact that the system of indentureship had collapsed for over fifteen years. In the minds of Colonial administrators, concerned politicians from the Indian government and even amongst East Indian leaders in Trinidad, Indians were still regarded as reaping the benefits of the sacrifices their ancestors had made when they signed the indenture contract. However in the 1930s, Trinidad's East Indian population was made up of those East Indians who remembered leaving India and those who knew nothing of indentureship. This reality challenged East Indian leaders to mobilise the working masses during a time of industrial and political upheaval.

This energy and restlessness amongst East Indians found common ground with Afro-Trinidadian grassroots organizations such as the Negro Welfare Cultural and Social

[103] *Ibid.*

Association (N.W.C.S.A.)[104] which grew out of the National Unemployment Movement (N.U.M.) and operated in the urban centres of Port of Spain. Its leaders included St. Vincent-born Elma Francois, James Barrat, Bertie Percival and Jim Headley who sought to unionize and organize workers in Trinidad. Members of the N.U.M. once belonged to Cipriani's T.WA, now the Trinidad Labour Party (T.L.P.), but as Rhoda Reddock points out, the main distinction between the approach of the N.W.C.S.A. and Cipriani was on the issue of "autonomous working class organization."[105] In 1934, hunger marches were organized in Port of Spain that illustrated the frustration of Cipriani's bureaucratic and constitutional approach in dealing with problems in the workplace. By 1935, under the guidance of Trinidadian- born Rupert Gittens, who was deported from France because of his involvement with the Communist party there, the NUM became the NWCSA.

In his case study of labour riots in Trinidad and the greater Caribbean region, Nigel Bolland notes that there was a rise in class consciousness appearing alongside increasing racial consciousness.[106] Politically motivated militant groups began to agitate and organize workers and the unemployed in 1934 and 1935.[107] In the 1930s, black leaders fostered a growing African consciousness that was a major development in the history of trade unions.[108] These leaders continued to espouse the ideals of Marcus Garvey, who had imagined a strong African race with its African homeland reclaimed from European colonialism. The main strand of the philosophy was: race first, then self-reliance and nationhood. Garvey's U.N.I.A linked other black intellectuals to take part in discussions that

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[105] Rhoda Reddock, *Elma Francois,* "The political handicaps facing Cipriani were: 1. His class position as a landowner from the propertied Catholic French Creole class 2. His acceptance of the British Labour Party Brand of Labour and Socialism to measure developments in Trinidad and Tobago 3. His discouragements of popular working class participation in struggles and in its place taking the grievances who would negotiate on their behalf, 21

[106] Nigel Bolland, *On the March. Labour Riots in the Caribbean 1934-1939* (London, 1995), 6.

[107] *Ibid.* 83

[108] Tony Martin, 'African and Indian Consciousness' in Bridget Brereton (ed.), *The General History of the Caribbean Volume V*. (London, 2004), 244.

affected African races. Pan-African organizations informed delegates on the conditions facing the African race worldwide.[109] The newspaper *The People* (1933-1944) replaced the *Labour Leader* as the organ of the working masses. Following suit, it carried articles for black men to rise up, organize and be educated on how best they could serve their fellow citizens. One article read:

> Black men, get busy, there is much work for you to do. Think the thing over and get your occupation. God and nature are still waiting on you to perform your particular work in the general scheme of things...We Negroes have a civilization to build. The unemployed white man has already built his civilization. Therefore do not let us follow anyone else talking about unemployment. Let us occupy our own time doing things that are worthwhile in science, art, literature, in engineering, in statesmanship, in industry, in commerce, in nation building, in Empire expansion... If I had the power of a Divine Magician I would reach into the mind of every Negro and stir him to every individual and collective action; yes, I would set him to restore the Empire of the Ethiopians. To do this would mean but very little unemployment but a continuous hustle and bustle, every man at his place. The workshop busy, the factory busy, the mart busy the colleges and universities all buy all leading to one ultimate end of civilization, the highest product of man's mind.[110]

Afro-Trinidadian workers had to find inward strength within their own race to combat notions of racial inferiority, and build a nation of their own that recognized the efforts of its workers. Organizations such as the N.W.C.S.A. galvanized workers through public demonstrations[111] and spoke of solidarity between workers in rhetoric that was infused by Christianity to demonstrate that black workers would find salvation through hard work and education.

Apart from Sinanan, C.B. (Charles Bahadoor) Mathura, who was Rienzi's close ally, continued to advocate for labour reform. As with Rienzi, Mathura spread the word of trade unionism to not only East Indians in Trinidad, but also to British Guiana. Mathura was a Hindu and a wealthy proprietor from Chaguanas who had served in the E.I.N.C.[112] Much like Rienzi, his public career as a labour leader was concerned with all labourers in Trinidad; although his racial identity was East Indian, he never subscribed to communal politics as seen

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[109] *Ibid.* 226

[110] *The People*, 19 May, 1934 'Wake Up Blackmen Author. The "Blackman' and 1, September, 1934 'The Next Emancipation' and 'Regaining Ancient Heritage'. N.A.T.T.

[111] *Ibid.* 10, September, 1935 'Woodford Square'.

[112] Port of Spain to Mr. McNaughten, Waterloo House London to C.O. 2, March, 1917. C.O. 295/515 T.N.A./U.K.

by the E.I.N.C. In the 1930s, Mathura urged labourers to organize, educate and agitate by supporting the T.W.A. and Cipriani in order to pressure the colonial administration for changes in labour conditions. Mathura published articles in *The People* and presided over T.W.A. meetings that were held on sugar estates which included California and Brechin Castle in Couva,[113] and Chaguanas, Curepe, San Juan and Port of Spain in the urban areas. These public meetings were designed to discuss the activities of the T.W.A. He even utilized Woodford Square as a public space in the centre of Port of Spain, which was also used by the N.W.C.S.A. to spread the word of trade unionism. This space would later be called the University of Woodford Square by Eric Williams, the future Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Mathura would hold mass gatherings and demonstrations where he answered questions such as: "Who is Captain Cipriani?"; "What is the TWA?"; "What has the T.W.A. done and what good can the TWA do for us?[114] He even supported a Women's section of the T.W.A. to be based in Port of Spain to ensure that women's voices and concerns were being heard.[115] As a member of the T.W.A, Mathura opposed the need for labourers to strike and preferred to work within the confines of the constitutional approach the T.W.A. took.

Despite Mathura's energetic work in the T.W.A, East Indians in Trinidad at this time were disappointed and disillusioned with the organisation. They were anxious for a political shake-up to enact substantial change. Private East Indian citizens merged these sentiments with their Afro-Trinidadian compatriots. Both sections of the populations were experiencing the same problems in industries and therefore merged their activities with those of the N.W.C.SA. For example, Poolbasie, an East Indian sugar estate worker who participated in the 1934 strikes on the sugar plantations, relayed information to the N.W.C.S.A in Central

[113]*The People*. 2, August 1934 'TWA meeting.'
[114]*Ibid*.11, August, 1934, 'T.W.A. Curepe Meeting'.
[115] For Mathura's travels activities please see articles in *The People*. 5, May,1934, 'May Day Demonstrations Point Fortin'; 18, August, 1934, 'Meeting in San Fernando'; 25, August, 1934, 'Meeting in San Fernando'; 6 September, 1934; 'Socialists meet at Woodford Square'; 15, September, 1934, 'Mathura TWA representative in British Guiana'; 20 October, 1934, ' Mathura in Demerara.'

Trinidad regarding the exploitation of East Indian labourers. Poolbasie claimed that dishonest drivers were increasingly being sent to check on the completion of work, and that drought made it impossible for East Indians.[116] This partnership between Afro- Caribbean organizations was vital in solidifying the unity between the two largest ethnic labouring masses in Trinidad and Tobago, for it would provide a solid platform for both groups to pressure the British government for changes in labour legislation and conditions. It was determined that active changes in workplace conditions were the avenues that would lead to the collapse of the old colonial order and usher in self-government. Afro-Indian unity was key to the success of the enterprise. Cyril Gayadeen urged the East Indian population to identify with their African brethren and reiterated that the two races should be united in a struggle against European imperialism. Both races, either through the economic institutions of slavery, or indentureship, fulfilled an imperial enterprise that maximized the productive output of sugar plantations by utilizing expendable labour. Therefore, the goals for economic and political emancipation were shared. Gayadeen stated that "both races should assist each other in all campaigns that either may wage for justice and fair-play. The African should not allow himself to be played off or flattered by the expense of the Indian, nor should the latter tolerate the same thing. United these two sections are invincible and the leaders of the two races should work out a definite and settled policy of these things. India has a valuable spiritual character, so has Africa. Neither the Afro-West Indian nor the East Indian should have to give up India or Africa."[117]

These sentiments that united class and racial consciousness were realized in 1935 when Italian dictator Mussolini ordered the Italian army to invade Ethiopia (Abyssinia). The Abyssinian conflict was a rallying point for both the Afro-Trinidadian masses and the global Pan-African network. Ethiopia had a particular significance for the colonized Africans both

[116] Reddock, *Elma Francois*, 14.
[117] *The People*, 8, September, 1935, 'Afro-Indian Unity Stressed'.

on the continent and across the diaspora because Ethiopia had been the one country to successfully resist European colonising efforts at the end of the nineteenth century.[118] Prayers for Ethiopia were published in newspapers like *The People* to express solidarity with the African populace in the Caribbean and Ethiopia: "Whether it is a war or is won or not by Abyssinia, the position of the Negro will be radically changed by the end of it. Having once taken up arms, the Negro will never lay them down until he achieves full emancipation. It is indeed the beginning of an admirable pride in the Negro which makes him so proud, and so ready to die for this once independent Negro Kingdom of the World."[119] N.W.C.S.A. members responded to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia by convincing Trinidad citizens to boycott Italian products and staged demonstrations to condemn the fascist principles of the Italian government. Other organizations such as the Daughters of Ethiopia and The West Indian Youth Welfare League made their debut to express support with African struggles across the globe.[120] In Port of Spain, the Friends of Ethiopia Committee was specially created to show Trinidad's support for their Ethiopian brethren. As leader of the T.L.P, Cipriani was part of this committee; this enabled him to show his firm solidarity with the working masses. He and concerned citizens gathered at the Trinidad Public library to petition the Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden and the British government to express indignation over the treatment of Ethiopia. Other members of this committee included C.M Lastique, Albion Gooding, R.J.M. Blackett and Messrs O.E Williams, Vivian Henry (Secretary of the T.L.P), L. Llewllyn and C.P. Alexander.[121] Also, this organization used the Italian-Ethiopian conflict to further the campaign for self-government in Trinidad. One of their resolutions demanded more representation on the Legislative Council. For Afro-Caribbean workers, the need for education and employment, and the plight of Ethiopia increased racial pride. This, in turn,

[118]Reddock, Elma *Francois*, 20
[119] *The People*, 8 September, 1935 , 'Negro Consciousness' and 10 August, 1935, 'The meaning of Ethiopian'.
[120] Rhoda Reddock, *Elma Francois*, 20.
[121] Friends of Ethiopia Committee to Governor Murchison Fletcher, Trinidad to W.C.A. Ormsby-Gore, C.O. 1936. C.O 318/425/15. T.N.A.U.K

gave strength to organize for change in labour, devoid of colonial interference. Hence, both the African and Indian masses in Trinidad through different organizations worked through anti-colonial struggles in India and Africa to petition for reform.

The spirit of racial unity was driven by the common goal of much needed labour reform in Trinidad; organizations were inspired by global nationalisms either in India or Africa. However, there were those in Trinidad who remained on the fringes of this eclectic political phenomenon. In Carapichaima, a private citizen and common labourer A.V. Stewart who was an ex-member of the U.N.I.A, stressed that the unemployment problems in Trinidad were reaching a crisis point. Wages were low and the cost of living high. He accused East Indians of setting the clock back by finding inspiration in the Indian National Congress, while the African subscribed to Marcus Garvey's U.N.I.A. that squandered thousands of dollars on defunct organizations. He wrote: "I do not belong to any organization nor isms", but if I had a choice I subscribe to the Labour party, and I implore both Indians and Africans to strengthen the hands of labourers in a common struggle."[122] Although, one does not know Stewart's racial identity, his statements illustrate that as individuals, Trinidadians could exercise their own conscious will to develop their own political sensibilities. It was the task of leaders like Cipriani, Rienzi or Butler (as we shall soon see), to mould the consensus of private citizens like Stewart to participate in their own political vision.

By 1935, Rienzi was back in Trinidad. He petitioned the colonial administration to acknowledge that the time had come for East Indians to receive prominent positions within the government to reflect the contributions they had made in Trinidad with regards to labour and development: "The East Indian community, like the rest of the communities were of the opinion that the time had come when some substantial form of Representative Government should be granted to the Colony, but as a minority community, like the minorities the world

[122] *The People*, June 27th, 1936 'Afro-Indian Unity by A.V. Stewart'.

over".[123] East Indians leaders demanded that at least one third of the seats in the Legislature be reserved for Indians to be elected by the General Electorate; that one third of the appointments to the civil service should be comprised of members among the East Indian community; and that if there are any nominated seats in such Legislature, one-third of the number of persons nominated should be from the East Indian community." [124] Leaders from this organization felt comfortable in working within the mechanisms of the colonial government structure, but they also engaged in communal politics to ensure East Indians would have a place in the Legislature.

Rienzi's approach to equal representation of East Indians regarding labour lay in a united front between East Indians and Afro-Trinidadians. To strengthen cooperation, he took advantage of staging his platform during the Italian-Abyssinian war. In Princes Town amidst a meeting in Drill Hall, Gool Mohammed, an Imam of the local mosque showed his solidarity with the Ethiopians. Speaking in both English and Urdu, he read long passages from the Koran and historical works showing that Ethiopia befriended Mohammed and early believers of Islam in days of persecution. He denounced the Italians as brutal and heartless, and appealed to all Muslims in Trinidad to love black people and to unite with them against the Italian fascist dictator. Here, Rienzi took this phenomenon one step further by deploying it in the wider movement for labour reform that would bring about West Indian self-government: "Rising in applause, Rienzi said that the purpose of the meeting was to voice protest against Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. He hoped the campaign waged in Trinidad against Italian aggression would unite East Indians and Africans. The issues of unity would result in the

[123]. The East Indian National Association. Princestown. Trinidad B.W.I 1935. Piarayal Pundit. President, (Town Merchant)Adrian Rienzi Vice President(Barrister at Law), Isaac Nandah. Hon. Secretary, Iraj, Khan (journalist)Asst. Hon. Secretary., Ramperagas Maharaj (Town Field proprietor). I.O.R .L/PJ/317. File 229. B.L.

[124] *Ibid.*

independence of African and India."[125] Thus, Rienzi transformed the mosque into a political centre that united Muslim East Indians and Afro-Caribbean members in fighting not only for Ethiopia, but also in strengthening the solidarity between the two populations.

Affiliation and solidarity with global anti-colonial movements launched campaigns for more constitutional reform. It gave Afro-Caribbean and East Indian populations the chance to unite against the colonial administration. Amongst the East Indian elite, India's struggle for home rule was paramount; however, it was imagined and utilized in different ways in a time when labour reform engendered self-government. In Hosein's mind, for East Indians to cope with modernity, the preservation of their language and religion was important. These became racial markers that reflected the rich historical heritage of their ancestors. However, at the grassroots level, race, and religion and even the use of language were intertwined at local levels with labour reform. Rienzi and his followers capitalized on these moments, and translated them in the form of a trade union.

[125] *The People*, 28, December, 1935, 'Afro-Indian Unity in Princes Town'.

VII. Riots of 1937 and Reactions

Above, the Oilfield Workers Trade Union, which was opened on Wednesday by Mr, T. Malcolm Milne Registrar. Reading from left to right, Mr. Blades (Sec. of the Union), Mr. Milne, and Mr. A. C. Rienzi (President of the Union.)

Figure 14: E.R. Blades, Mr. Milne and Mr. Adrian Cola Rienzi in the headquarters of the OWTU, San Fernando. Source: *The People*, 4, September, 1937.

The underlying causes of the widespread strikes and riots in June 1937, resulted from deteriorating economic conditions of workers in Trinidad and Tobago.[126] The cost of living had risen in the island, but general wages did not match the living expenses of casual labourers. These riots were of particular concern because they took place in the oilfields. Oil was a strategic commodity for the British Empire, and the British government could not handle any disruption in trade. More importantly, oil was important to imperial defence. Colonial Secretary Ormsby-Gore and Governor Murchison Fletcher agreed that in wartime, Trinidad's oilfields were among the few imperial oilfields on which the Admiralty and the Air Ministry could rely.[127]Apex (Trinidad) Oilfields and Trinidad Leaseholds Ltd. were the

[126] Brereton, *History of Modern Trinidad*, 177.

[127] Howard Johnson, 'Oil, Imperial Policy and the Trinidad Disturbances', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 4 (1975), 54.

leading manufacturers of oil operating on the island. In the 1930s, the island's oil exports eclipsed agricultural exports as the returns on oil proved to be higher. According to Arthur Calder-Marshall, profits from the oil industries alone in Trinidad amounted to £1,540,000 while the wages paid to workers was £437,000 - less than a third of the profits.[128] Bolland commented that Apex refused to address the workers' grievances, which included "low wages, long hours, and wage reductions for late coming and poor working conditions."[129] Another grievance was the Red Book or Service Book where workers identified their specialized skill. Workers testified that the book was used to prevent men from moving from occupation to occupation, thus restricting their mobility and freezing their wages.[130] As well, a minority of white South Africans were appointed to senior posts in the companies, thus racializing managerial positions to which black workers were denied entry.

[128] Arthur Calder-Marshall, *The Glory Dead*, (London, 1939), 267.
[129]Bolland, *On the March*, 88.
[130] Murchison Fletcher. Legislative Council debates, *Hansard*, 9, July, 1937. It is useful to note the language of Fletcher. He stated "Labour thinks" the Red book was used for other purposes. He homogenized Trinidad's workers under the category of labour. Secondly, Murchison Fletcher was acquainted with the plight of East Indian indentured workers in Fiji, and noted the similarity of poverty East Indian workers laboured under.

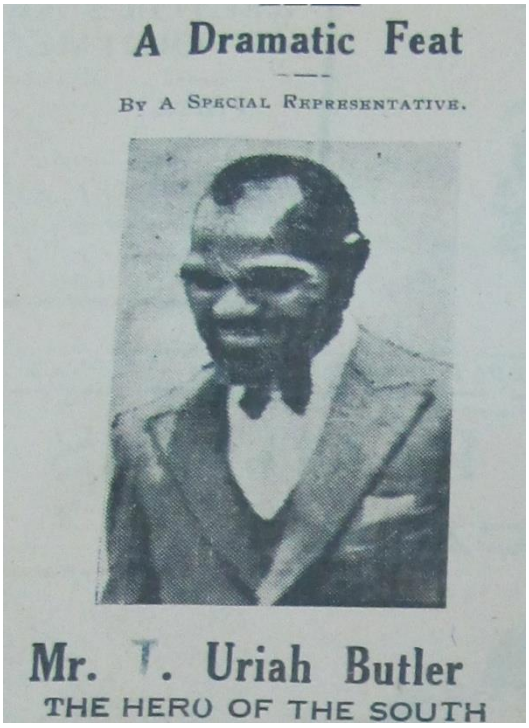

Figure 15: Uriah "Buzz Bulter".
Source: *The People,* 2, October, 1937

It was in this tumultuous atmosphere that Tubal Uriah (T.U.) Buzz Butler, a Grenadian by birth and a worker in the oil industry, emerged. Butler was a former member of the T.L.P. and characterized himself as a loyal member of the British Empire who had faith in British justice. Like Rienzi, and the members of the N.W.C.S.A., Butler felt betrayed by Cipriani's politics which had done nothing to obliterate the exploitative economic schemes of oil companies. As a worker in the oil industry, Butler sought the consolidation of Trinidad's working masses to engage in strike action. This remained his last option when he felt convinced that oil companies were not responding to workers' complaints.

With the aid of the N.W.C.S.A in 1935, Butler organized a series of hunger marches in Fyzabad (South Trinidad), where the headquarters of Apex Oilfields was located. Here he openly attacked Cipriani for not listening to the voices of the striking workers. Strikes were isolated and confined to Siparia, La Brea, Erin and other village areas where there was a high concentration of oil workers.[131] Rienzi realized the importance of Butler's influence amongst

[131] Rennie, *Working Class in Trinidad and Tobago*, 64.

the working masses and formed the Trinidad Citizen's League (T.C.L.) to be an all-encompassing organization that included all of Trinidad's working masses workers. It would serve to rival Cipriani's T.L.P. This partnership brought Rienzi's vision of a labour movement that transcended racial lines and brought it to full fruition.

In June 1937, the momentum for agitation exploded. Butler coordinated a series of strikes by oilfield workers who were employed by Trinidad Leaseholds in Fyzabad and Forest Reserve. However, this time the strikes spread to sugar estates in Point Fortin, San Fernando, Penal and St. Madeleine where the majority of workers were East Indians. Workers stopped the cane trains, called workers out of the fields and the factories, assaulted company managers and shut down the water supply and lighting plant. [132] To further express his radical actions, Butler shifted from Rienzi and created the British Empire Citizens' and Workers' Home Rule Party (B.E.C.W.H.R.P). [133] He infused Christian spirituality in his speeches to galvanize workers into strike action. The strikes that engulfed the island had cut across race lines, and now affected every sector of the economy.

Police tried to arrest Butler, but attempts to capture and incarcerate him intensified strike action and support for him.[134] Martin Thomas has examined the relationship between political economy and the role of policing in various European empires during the interwar period. Trinidad serves as a good example, because he illustrates how the need to protect oil interests in the island relied on the island's defence forces. This relationship was then complicated by the dynamics of Trinidad's labour forces that had the power to stall industrial output. The level of violence then escalated when Corporal Charlie King and sub-inspector Bradburn were killed by rioters. The former was burned alive. The riots left nine dead and a

[132] *Ibid.*
[133] Nigel Bolland, 'On the March', 85. See also Nigel Bolland, *The politics of labour in the British Caribbean : the social origins of authoritarianism and democracy* (Princeton, 2001). In this later monograph, Bolland synthesizes his argument on creolization with the labour rebellions of the 1930s.
[134]Martin Thomas, *Violence and the Colonial Order Police, Workers, and Protest in the European Colonial Empires, 1918-40* (Cambridge, 2012).

further fifty wounded. Local calypsoes were sung amidst the June disturbances: "Murder at Fyzabad/ It's the worse riot we ever had. The oilfield workers at every grade stopped working and demanded: 'More money we must be paid."[135] The Trinidad Light Infantry Batallion and both the H.M.S. *Exeter* and *Ajax* were called in bythe Royal Navy to stop the insurrection. However, the strikes displayed no sign of quieting down. Articles from the *Trinidad Guardian* reported: "Men, young and old women, and children, brandishing cutlasses and other weapons walked from factory to factory inflicting workers with strike fever."[136] It was only when Butler was arrested that a sense of order was restored to the colony.

The June disturbances had unleashed an unstable and explosive reaction from disenfranchised workers whose energy needed to be channelled. Given the urgency and anxiety amongst colonial officials in Trinidad, Governor Murchison Fletcher, Adrian Cola Rienzi, Mr C. Roach, a former plumber and E.R. Blades met at Forest Reserve, Fyzabad and convened the first meeting of the Oilfields Workers' Trade Union (O.W.T.U.) In the midst of the strike, in a private communication between Rienzi and Butler that was later presented to the Legislative Council by Governor Murchison Fletcher, Butler wrote: "I find myself in the most unhappy position of not being able to call off the strike which has caused so much hurt to the colony and its inhabitants ... I respectfully beg that you communicate this information to His Excellency the governor through the Strike Committee. Thanking you for your efforts to make peace."[137] Much like Passfield's observations that trade unions ensured diplomacy, it was recognized, as seen by Butler's sentiments that they also served to prevent violence. Fletcher expressed that now was the right time for O.W.T.U and called upon the importance of trade unions.[138] The minutes of this meeting adds to Martin Thomas' discussion of the role that Sir Murchison Fletcher played during the riots. These 'new trade unions' had to give

[135] Marshall, *Glory Dead*, 123.
[136] *Ibid*. 91-92.
[137] *Hansard*. Legislative Council Debates: 9, July, 1937. Murchison Fletcher.
[138] 'First Meeting of the Oilfields Workers' Factory Trade Union' O.W.T.U. 19 July, 1937. Archives. San Fernando

workers the "conviction that they were fighting for better conditions, so that occurrences of sabotage would diminish."[139]

Although the 1937 disturbances are synonymous with Butler's name, it was Rienzi who had carried out the series of negotiations amongst strikers and the various companies. As Kelvin Singh writes: "Rienzi's role in the labour movement, especially in the crucial years 1937-1940 was not only critical but perhaps indispensable for the establishment and survival of trade unionism in Trinidad."[140] He was appointed as president of the O.W.T.U. and later formed the All Trinidad Sugar Worker's Estate and Factory Worker's Trade Union (A.T.S.E.F.W.T.U.) which was recognized as a legitimate union. He was also awarded a seat on the Legislative Council as the representative of Victoria.[141] The oilfield workers were Afro-Caribbean and the sugar workers were Indian. Through a single trade union, Rienzi was able to symbolically unite the two major ethnic groups via the need for equal rights in work environments.

In his book A *History of Negro Revolt* (1938) later called a *History of Pan-African Revolt*, C.L.R James (1968), praised Rienzi for his efforts during the strike by illustrating how Rienzi had transcended the issues of race. James also linked Butler with heroic African leaders like Toussaint L'Ouverture and Marcus Garvey, and gave credit to Rienzi for fighting alongside Afro-Trinidadians throughout the strike. James wrote: "In the recent elections, in the key southern constituency, the worker's candidate was Mr. Rienzi, and Indian lawyer, president of the new unions. Some of his opponents tried to raise the race question: Negro as opposed to Indian. But he and other and leaders poured scorn on the racial question and proclaimed that the issue was one of class. Thus the workers had almost at a single bound

[139] Marshall, *Glory Dead*, 266, and Thomas, *Violence and Colonial Order*, 243-248.
[140] Kelvin Singh, 'Adrian Cola Rienzi and the Labour Movement in Trinidad, (1925-1944)' *Journal of Caribbean History,* 16 (1982), 11.

[141] *Ibid*. 23

placed themselves in the forefront of the international working class movement."[142] James' praise for Rienzi is significant because even though Rienzi was of East Indian ethnic background, James placed him within the historic achievements of African workers' struggles. The 1937 strike was another achievement in a series of moments dating back to the time of slavery when African workers engaged in strikes with the hope of becoming sovereign in these islands that were still under British rule. By including Rienzi in his analysis, James realized the importance of acknowledging the East Indian contingent to stress the importance of unity.

In the aftermath of the strikes, Colonial officials both in England and Trinidad were concerned about security in the colony since the strikes had occurred in the sugar and oil fields. The Forster Commission was entrusted with the task of coming up with a comprehensive report on labour conditions in Trinidad. Representatives before the Commission were drawn from the E.I.N.C., the East Indian National League of Trinidad and Tobago and the East Indian Welfare; all attended meetings where dilapidated living and social conditions that had led to the strikes were considered.[143] The Commission recognized that under the terms of indenture, East Indian immigrants would be provided for by the employer and kept in a good state of affairs; the reality was that the barrack system of housing labourers proved unsuitable due to the extreme disrepair and lack of attention to hygiene. According to medical witnesses, the barracks were a series of ruinous huts and open cesspits. However, during witness testimony colonial authorities diminished the involvements of East Indians. The final report stated:

> A condition of lethargy pervaded the whole [East Indian Community] which was only broken on festive occasions and or in times of disorder...It has been definitely stated to me that the East Indian agricultural labourers did not want to strike. Well, I think that is the answer- lethargy only broken in times of disorder. We have been told that the younger

[142]C.L.R. James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (London, 1938), 80.
[143] BPP.1937-38, XV,(*Trinidad and Tobago Disturbances 1937 Report of the Commission*, Appendix), p. 103-111.

> generation are disinclined to work on the land. Is it to be wondered that in these circumstances the younger people leave the country and move into town?[144]

This was the only mention of the presence of East Indians during the strikes. Whether or not there was enough of a drive by East Indians to collectively make a conscious decision to strike, the apathy of the colonial government in Trinidad suggested that East Indians were merely labourers who worked behind the scenes. Thus, they further relegated East Indians to the corners of Trinidad society. However, it also proves that colonial authorities were anxious that a young and once docile vital labour supply was diversifying into occupational standings. These "creolized Indians" were also willing to joining Afro-Trinidadian workers who demanded more wages and better working conditions.

In reports of suspected communist elements that fuelled the strikes of 1937, Rienzi was cited as a main instigator. Colonial officials sought to take advantage of divisions within East Indian communities. In a letter that Selwyn Grier wrote to Henry Moore, Grier stated that he had no confidence in Rienzi, or in the trade unions. However, he was fearful that as long as Rienzi was leader, there would be trouble; slumps in sugar prices, and the unrest on the plantations in Trinidad as well as Rienzi's actions only added to the volatility of the colony. He wrote:

> Personally, I do not give Rienzi a very long reign as leader of the workers in Trinidad. It is improbable that an East Indian would be able to retain influence over the negro workers in the oil fields, and as regards the East Indian labourers on the sugar estates, Rienzi has two bitter opponents in the other two East Indian members on the Legislative Council, namely Roodal and Teelucksingh. Roodal is a very poor type, but Teelucksingh still carries much weight with the East Indian community and is president of the local branch of the Congress Party. Personally I found the latter quite willing to help the administration my last two years in Trinidad, and we still maintain a desultory correspondence. My view therefore is that Rienzi is a dishonest knave, will crash in the near future, but one must face the fact that he may cause serious trouble before the crash comes.[145]

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144. *Ibid.*111

145 Grier to Moore.12, April 1938. Enclsoure 1. CO 295/606/4. T.N.A/U.K. This file is extremely important because it lists members of Pan-African organizations who were influential in the strikes of 1937. In *The People*, published articles that in Trafalgar Square in London individuals such as George Padmore and C.L.R. James organized demonstrations to show solidarity with Trinidad's working masses. See *The People*, 4 September, 1937 'Africans Hold Mass Meeting in London'. Grier's report indentifies that communist organizations like The L.A.I., the N.W.A. under the guidance of Arnold Ward, the Colonial Seamen's

On one level, these statements illustrate the great anxiety that the colonial administration felt about Rienzi's ability to organize strike action. At this elite level, the policy of divide and rule became apparent as leaders like Teelucksingh and Roodal preferred to cooperate with the colonial government.

However, there was evidence that divide and rule tactics were also permeating East Indian leadership; amidst Rienzi's campaigns to rally support, there were signs of division. During the 1937 disturbances, members of the E.I.N.C. like Teelucksingh did not support strike action. Teelucksingh continued to use the familiar constitutional rhetoric: since racially, Indians formed one-third of the population, it was their right to demand minority privileges. In fact, Teelucksingh openly called for East Indians to not vote for Rienzi in his bid to be the Legislative Council representative for Victoria. Certain supporters of the E.I.N.C. (for example, Budri Ramkeesoon) declared that since Rienzi had changed his name and adopted the name of an Italian activist, he had betrayed his nationality as an East Indian because his held his own race in indifference and suffered low self-esteem.[146] Previously, Ramkeesoon had stated that East Indians should be proud of the fact they were brought over to Trinidad as indentured labourers. Like Hosein, Teelucksingh and Ramkeesoon's moderate politics were entwined with concepts of race and ethnicity. Their political vision suggested that East Indians should look to the past when campaigning for more representation. The colonial administration feared Rienzi's active politics and supported the likes of Teelucksingh who it was thought could temper the radical sentiments taking root amongst the East Indian elements in Trinidad society. Again, this tactic of divide and rule would lead to the clashes in East Indian political culture in which race, culture and ethnicity would harden divisions and alienate East Indian communities in Trinidad.

Association, the League of Coloured Peoples and the International African Service Bureau (IASB) now run by George Padmore. Ward and Rienzi had a firm friendship in which Padmore and the IASB galvanized support for the strikes by supplying money via New York, Prague, Liverpool and Lancashire.

[146] *The People*, 5, March, 1938, 'Rienzi and his critics'.

At the time that this investigation was carried out in various parts of the island, East Indians regardless of religious backgrounds- and who spoke in Hindi- developed local trade unions to support the labour movement that was initiated by Rienzi. On the California estate, sugar workers from Brechin Castle and Woodford Lodge gathered to listen to Mr Smart, the President of the Usine St. Madeleine branch who gave a stirring exhortation to workers to wholeheartedly support and cooperate with the sugar unions. A Mr. Drakes then interpreted in Hindi to the East Indian workers what had been told at the meeting. [147] A Mr Naudah of Barrackpore, addressed the audience in Hindi and afterwards in English. He said: "On the 19th June when there were rifles, bayonets and machine guns about, Mr Rienzi openly advocated the cause of the workers. If Mr. Rienzi was not afraid to associate himself with the workers' cause, under such circumstances I was to expect that he would fearlessly work in their best interests when returned to the Legislative Council.' He appealed to them, to give Mr. Rienzi their support.[148] In Barrackpore, Mr. Jabnah who had recently returned to the colony from India spoke at great length in Hindi. He said that in organizing the workers along trade unions lines, Mr. Rienzi had taken a step in the right direction as trade unionism was also taking off in India.[149] In Caroni, at the Canadian Mission School, Pundit Haran spoke about trade unionism and his support for Rienzi in his campaign to be elected to the Legislative Council.[150] In Debe, comrade Baldeo Persaud in opening the meeting, welcomed the workers and thanked them for the large numbers that they had turned out on that night. The majority being East Indians, he addressed them in Hindi and explained to them the existing conditions of the sugar industry. The meeting came to a close by the offering of a prayer in Hindi.[151] Lastly, Mr Sheik Niamath, who was followed by an interpreter who spoke

[147] *Ibid*, ,26 September, 1937, 'Sugar workers meet in California'.
[148] *Ibid.* 18, December, 1937 'Electors Pledge Support for Rienzi'.
[149] *Ibid.*
[150] *Ibid*. 27, June, 1938 'Rienzi gains Enthusiastic Support'. Rienzi did succeed in his elections and became the representative for the county of Victoria'
[151] *Ibid.* 'Of Interest to Sugar Workers'.

in Hindi to the cane farmers, condemned the practices of sugar cane manufacturers and said that workers could no longer abide by their rules.[152] From these examples, one can see there was an array of East Indians in Trinidad where religious affiliation, language did not dictate one's political views.

On the other hand, East Indians elite members such as Mathura were at odds over the issue of language. He wrote:

> We must not close our eyes to the fact that Mother India would not have been in position to claim her right place in the British Empire had not her sons and daughters been educated in English, and even in Trinidad, the Indians who are succeeding are those who have been educated in English and since are asking for equal opportunities and treatment from the hands of government. Employers of labour are you going to neglect good English education and not compete with the rest of the community for a position in Trinidad?[153]

Mathura respected the languages of Hindi and Urdu as symbols of the continuing connection with India. He never called for East Indians to give up learning these languages, but to realize that a knowledge of English would help to halt the treatment of East Indians as alien migrants as in the days of indentureship; cultural reminders of India such as language had to revert to the private sphere. The elitism of Mathura over the issue of language paved the way for further divisions within the East Indian community that provided impetus for other interested parties to devise new ways of representation.

VIII. Conclusion

From this chapter one can see how disenfranchised East Indians envisioned a variety of political pathways. In the context of the economic crisis of the 1930s, the Creole Indian discovered a new, radical form of politics. One the one hand, congress leaders and affiliates like F. E. M. Hosein and Sarran Teelucksingh sought to work within the constitution; the political salvation of East Indians in the colony found strength in India's past. On the other hand, there was tension when East Indians chose to cooperate with Afro-Trinidadians. From the inert politics of these groups, and a time of great industrial upheaval emerged a figure like

[152]*Ibid.* 22, January, 1938, 'Cane Farmers'.
[153]*Ibid.* 27 June, 1936, 'Letters to the Editor by C.B. Mathura. Hindi vs. English'.

Rienzi. His vision captured the spirit of restlessness where his experiences in both Trinidad and London gave voice to East Indians who were engaging in wider societal movements that included Afro-Trinidadians. His historical consciousness of present anti-colonial nationalism in India, Ireland, Russia and Africa that was influenced by socialism was made manifest in Trinidad in the form of industrial unrest. In the space between these two visions, the colony's future politics would be divided.

Chapter 5

"The Good West Indian"

The East Indian Problem and the West Indian Royal Commission 1938-1945

I. Introduction

Following the riots in the Caribbean, the West Indian Royal Commission (also known as the Moyne Commission) was convened in 1938 to investigate the social and economic problems affecting the region.[1] In each colony, the commissioners enquired into housing, health, agriculture, hospitals, schools, prisons, factories, docks, lunatic asylums, orphanages, leper homes, land settlements, and questions of constitutional structure, as well as making acquaintance with significant individuals and organizations.[2] The Moyne Commission represented the most profound enquiry into the British West Indies ever conducted and would provide the blueprint for economic and constitutional development after 1945.

As we have seen earlier, strikes and disturbances in the West Indian colonies drew attention to social problems that, in turn, drove political reform. The 1919 strikes for example, led directly to debates and discussion about extending the franchise to the colony's inhabitants. Following the visit of E.F.L. Wood in 1923, electoral districts and boundaries were drawn up in Trinidad and a limited franchise was extended. Although Legislative Council members would now be elected, both candidates and voters were required to hold property. Moreover, voters were subjected to a literacy test that would determine their level of English. This meant that most of the working class, and especially those from India were disenfranchised. Brinsley Samaroo argues that in Trinidad, the period after 1925 saw an increased demand for colonial reform. The agitation of local pressure groups combined with

[1] BPP. VI, 1944-1945. West Indian Royal Commission Report. (W.I.R.C.). Fieldwork in the British West Indies was carried out by a team of experts in 1938-1939; however, with the onset of World War II, publication of the report was delayed. However, parts of the report, especially those sections regarding East Indian problems was supplied to various interested groups prior to its formal publication in 1945

[2] *Ibid*.xvii

the turn in British colonial policy towards extending democratic participation, led to the achievement of the full adult franchise in Trinidad only in 1946.[3] This chapter specifically looks at the participation of various East Indian individuals and groups in the politics of colonial reform. In particular, this chapter seeks to assess and expand the concept by which East Indians were becoming creolized West Indians.

In the final publication of the report in 1945,[4] under the "Local and Sectional Questions", "The East Indian Problem" was given some attention. At the time of the Commission, numerically East Indians in the British West Indies were in the minority: in Jamaica the East Indian population was 18,000; in British Guiana 131,000 (42 % of the population), and in Trinidad 151,000 (34% of the population). [5] Experts agreed that with the termination of indentureship, laws that safeguarded the position of Indian migrants had virtually lapsed. In the British West Indies, "the position in law of the East Indian was in no way different from that of the creole except in so far as certain rights to repatriation were still in force."[6] It was emphasized that if successive special and separate inquiries into the general conditions of East Indians were made, "it would only reinforce their notions of regarding themselves as having a separate status. The problems affecting the community as a whole must be tackled for the community as a whole, and not differentially, for certain sections of it." [7]

It is striking that although East Indians in Trinidad, Guiana and Jamaica were treated as a separate issue, memoranda of evidence submitted by East Indian individuals and organizations, suggest that their level of participation was embedded in the very political processes by which Trinidad- and indeed an entire region- was seeking to become politically enfranchised. For Trinidad, the political awakening of the East Indian community could not

[3] Brinsley Samaroo, 'The Making of the 1946 Trinidad Constitution', *Caribbean Studies*, 15 (1976), 5-27.

[5] BPP. VI, 1944-1945 (W.I.R.C. 1938-1945.), p.411
[6] *Ibid*. 415
[7] *Ibid.* 417

be separated from the mobilisation of workers of African descent. As we shall see, evidence and testimony not only given by East Indian organizations in name, but also from Cipriani's TLP, the Guianese and West Indies Labour Congress (G&W.I.L.C)- in which Adrian Cola Rienzi was a prominent member- and individuals elected to the Legislative Council of Trinidad attracted Indian responses and even participation. Yet in this process of mass political participation and inclusion, the language and practice of exclusion was employed. For some East Indians, a consciousness of their historical predicament as descendants of Indian indentured labourers who had ensured the survival of Trinidad's agricultural sectors enhanced their abilities to bring forth specifically East India social and economic disabilities. Elements of race and religion were part of their memoranda. These strands of thought determined the levels at which East Indians were ready to join Trinidad's working masses in the national momentum for self-government and even the goal of a Federated West Indian Government. By analyzing their testimonies given during the Moyne Commission, one begins to see different imagined political realities taking shape. In turn, East Indians were transforming how British authorities "saw" the West Indies as not just colonies in which resources had to be developed, but as territories with people.

II. Setting the scene

East Indians leaders sought to make visible the presence of the East Indian on the island. They wanted assurances that the East Indian would be included in the political process for more representation in Trinidad. However, their endeavours proved difficult, given the range of economic, political and religious diversity in the island. The following evidence provides a glimpse into the nature of the task East Indians leaders had to overcome to ensure the East Indian contingent was properly represented in Trinidad.

In 193, a memorandum was submitted to the Moyne Commission by the Indian St. Patrick Cane Farmer Producers. Those who signed the petition included Timothy Roodal,

chairman of the Penal District Agricultural Society; J.R. Mahabirsingh; Satanrayan Gokhool; Madhosingh, who was the Chairman of the Woodland La Fortune District Agricultural Society; Gobardhan Pandit, member of the East Indian Advisory Board (EIAB); Ramkissoon Mathura and Jaimungal Seesaran. The county of St. Patrick comprised the towns of Penal, Debe, Point Fortin, La Brea, Siparia, Cedros and Oroupuche. Their memorandum contains evidence of the efforts of East Indians peasants, and demonstrated how their communities were adapting and evolving into a modern society at the social and political levels.

These members of the St. Patrick Cane Committee provided detail on East Indian peasant life on this part of the island. They described East Indian dwellings resembling huts that were made of tapia covered with carat which were situated on little hillocks. East Indians reared cows and other livestock including poultry, and grew ground provisions on these lands. Innovations in agriculture were also described by Mr H. Janemansingh who worked for the Department of Agriculture. He noted that experiments with growing soya beans in the lagoon had met with success. Small crops like peas that were introduced and directly imported from India were popular with the peasants in the district, for it was converted to dhal (split-pea soup) that was largely used by Indian families. Requests made to the Department of Agriculture for turmeric, saffron and ginger seeds were also made as these items were popular with Indian families especially for use in cooking. Money was needed for seeds to meet local demand for these crops that then could be exported to foreign markets. Requests for the development of fruit crops such as oranges and pineapples were also made as individual exporters were selling these items to British Guiana and Barbados and the United Kingdom; however, if money was given to help stimulate the industry, farmers could produce better quality crops. As well, recommendations for the rice industry to be stimulated were made. In order for these industries to be successful, there had to be more

communication between the Department of Agriculture in India and the Imperial Centre for Tropical Agriculture based in Trinidad (I.C.T.A).[8]

However, with the rapid development of the oil industry, of which the areas in St. Patrick such as Point Fortin are noteworthy, rights to land ownership and local agricultural industries where East Indians worked were under threat. In leasing Crown lands, the government retained for themselves the oil rights associated with the land, which were then handed over to oil companies. The government could by law give permission to oil companies to enter these lands and win the rights to the land without the consent of the surface owners. [9] There were gross discrepancies in compensation where one company would give a man $300 per acre while in the same vicinity, another man would be only given $150. If the landowner refused this price, the government would give permission to the oil companies to drill for oil without any recompense to the farmer. With this type of power "a man could be turned out of his property at any time, thus placing him and his family in a precarious position as citizens, and particularly as an agriculturalist."[10] East Indians became "useful citizens to Trinidad by way of turning areas wasteland and swamp land into prime areas of cultivating crops such as rice."[11] By oil companies taking away lands from East Indians, this indicates how disparities in land settlement schemes deprived East Indians of the means to become self-sufficient- a process which clearly contributed to poor living conditions. They claimed:

> The Government has leased these lands on a 10% royalty basis; the Company is also paying a rental of one or two shillings an acre for Crown lands leased. In order to make these people loyal and useful citizens of Trinidad and the British Empire, by right the first option of Oil Rights should be given to surface owners who in turn would deal with the oil Companies in the same manner as the present Oil Right owners.[12]

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[8] St. Patrick Sugar Cane Committee (W.I.R.C.), 1938-1945. C.O. 950/817. T.N.A./U.K.
[9] *Ibid.*
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid*.
[12] *Ibid.*

From these statements, one can see that concepts of land ownership amongst East Indians were caught in a struggle between the government and the business interests of the oil companies. The latter thought that it was in Trinidad's best interests that extractive industries should be developed, even though this practice would displace East Indian peasants. Land cultivation was vital to the Indian presence on the island; this essential fact had stemmed from the time of indentureship. Now, the encroachment of the oil industry not only threatened their livelihoods, but also their sense of place on the island.

Economic grievances and solutions pertaining to land were not the sole concern of East Indians. Schooling, sanitation and health were also some of the further social problems facing these communities. As a way of dealing with an array of issues, one solution was to set up village councils in settlements like Penal, in the ward of Siparia, and in Debe in the ward of Naparima. These village councils- that resembled the village Panchyat like that in India, would ideally include a sanitary inspector, a poor relief officer, a chief overseer of public works, department and/ or local board, a school teacher, a chairman of an agricultural society, different representatives of religious denominations and Friendly societies. It hoped that councils like these would be recognized in an advisory capacity to the government in which issues like sanitation, health and improvements on streets or any other social problem would be discussed. In fact, these village committees were already in operation in the aforementioned settlements. In sum, this memorandum revealed the social and economic conditions in this heartland.

On one level, this memorandum shows how indigenous practices of food production and even forms of government found in the Indian diasporic homeland were interfacing with the realities of a modernizing industrial and political outlook in Trinidad. In other words, the East Indian communities in them were not by any means static. At the ground level, aspects of tradition like the Panchyat were modernized. Secondly, superimposed on this problem was

the tension between British authorities and the disenfranchised Afro-Trinidadian and West Indian populations who wanted more political and economic autonomy in the region. As well, in India there were interested Indian parties who took great interest in ensuring that the religious rights of East Indians in Trinidad were protected. As we shall see, the different political views and rhetoric used by elite East Indians in their platforms tried to account for the heterogeneous identity of East Indian communities. There was a communalist vision defined from within versus the position of other participants who wanted to make a new Trinidadian nation.

III. Political sovereignty vs. economic trusteeship: the Trinidad Labour Party and the Guianese and West Indian Labour Congress

For East Indians to write themselves in the future of the West Indies and indeed to become visible shareholders in their futures, two pathways emerged: one in which East Indians were part of an enfranchised West Indian population, or a further possibility where East Indians could prosper in the Crown colony provided economic grievances were to be addressed.

In order to contextualize the actions of particular individuals, one can look to the literature being produced within the English metropole both preceding and following the West Indian riots. Both C.L.R. James' '*The Case for West Indian Self-Government'*, published in 1933 and W.M.Macmillan's '*Warning from the West Indies: A Tract for Africa*', published in 1935-and then reprinted in 1938 following the riots in Trinidad, serve as good examples. Each author offered their insights on the deteriorating conditions in the West Indies. The former was a noted Pan-Africanist and Marxist activist, and the latter was both a Rhodes Scholar and South African historian. James' work was an indictment of the Crown colony system of government in the West Indies. He submitted his case to Arthur Cipriani of Trinidad, T.A. Marryshow and J. Elmore of Grenada, and C.D. Rawle of Dominica. At the time, these gentlemen were discussing the idea with Secretary of State for the Colonies Philip Cunliffe-Lister of a federation of some of the Windward and Leeward islands of the West

Indies.[13] James argued that the root of the problems facing the region was that it lacked a constitution based on democratic lines. While his treatise was intended for the whole of the West Indies, James drew his examples from his native Trinidad. He regarded members of the Legislative Council, mostly white British officers, as strangers to the West Indies.[14] As trustees of the islands, they justified their rule by racializing the "African as a simple childish fellow who does not produce sufficient men of calibre necessary for administering his own affairs." [15] To James, there would only be peace when, in each colony, the final decisions on policy and action rested with the elected representatives of the people. James spoke directly to a British audience informing them that African slaves and their descendants in the West Indies were ready for self- government. He entreated the West Indian public to be vigilant in their political affairs: "Otherwise we are led as we are by a string, we remain without a credit board, and without self-respect at home, a bastard, feckless conglomeration of individuals inspired by no common purpose moving to no common end."[16] The only solution was an elected Legislative Council.[17]

On the other hand, Macmillan's work hoped to offer a sobering analysis of the conditions facing Britain's oldest of colonies. He argued that the imperial conscience was shocked by the string of disturbances in the West Indies, and if they were not addressed, Britain's African territories would be at stake. He stated that by "nature and definition, colonies are colonies just because they are poor and backward and to allow them to remain so reflects no credit on the colonizing power."[18] In fact, the root of the trouble had to do with the lack of knowledge and of "sympathetic imagination in the British public responsible for

[13] C.L.R. James, *The Case for West Indian Self-Government* (London, 1933).
[14] *Ibid*. 19
[15] *Ibid.* 6-7
[16] *Ibid*. 32
[17] *Ibid*. 32
[18] W.M. Macmillan, *A Warning from the West Indies*. *A Tract for Africa* (London, 1938), 13.

imperial policy."[19] The solution was to strengthen the peasant class through development in land ownership that could stimulate ailing agricultural industries. Moreover, other social problems such as health and education needed to be addressed. Macmillan acknowledged the failure of Crown rule to carry its burden of responsibility for the unrepresented masses, and that security for "economic policy must be entrenched with political rights."[20] However, constitutional reform in a Crown colony society was but an item in the long list of problems to be solved in the West Indies. In fact, Macmillan stated "that it should also show that while freedom of good government and political expression is a stimulus to good government and an indispensable check, much more is needed to build a great society in these backward colonies."[21] His paternalism was in direct contrast to James' perspective. From both sides there was an impasse, and the key issue was political sovereignty. One side argued for political reform that would place a degree of political autonomy in the hands of West Indians, while the other affirmed the British presence in the West Indies, and the only way to legitimise that presence was through the trust of colonial authorities to develop key industries.

Yet in the resolutions proposed for the West Indies, in both works, the East Indian population was naturally absorbed into the cosmopolitan population of the West Indies. Each author entwined the legacy of slavery with questions of political enfranchisement. In Macmillan's work, indentureship was only mentioned as the means by which migrant Indians arrived to the West Indies. In a footnote, James explicitly wrote that East Indians formed 12% of the population, adding that there was no need to give them special treatment as they were superior in every way to the corresponding classes in India, "for there was no racial

[19] *Ibid*.14. Macmillan wrote these lines in a subsequent preface to the 1938 re-publication of his work. These statements were written after reading the 1937 Forster report that described the riots in Trinidad and while the Moyne Commission was taking place.
[20] *Ibid*.63
[21] *Ibid.*

antagonism between the two races."[22] Perhaps one can see that James was aware of the tactics employed by British imperialists through the indentureship system, and the manipulation of appointments to the Legislative Council which sowed the seeds for racial disharmony; for Trinidadians and other West Indians to regain control of their respective territories, they had to be unified.

The absence of the East Indian, coupled with the opposing views of Macmillan and James can provide one with an understanding of how East Indians in their actions during the Moyne Commission were shaping their political consciousness. Adrian Rienzi and Timothy Roodal- both East Indians- were members of the Legislative Council at this point. Roodal, along with Cipriani belonged to the T.L.P., while Rienzi including Cipriani belonged to the Guianese and West Indies Labour Congress (G&W.I.L.C) that emerged in the late 1920's.[23] Neither wanted special status for East Indians.

Rienzi declared that Trinidad was being run by "'big businessmen'" who profited from the work of the proceedings of the mass population, and who preferred to see the West Indian population as "hewers of wood and drawers of water".[24] Along with representatives from British Guiana and Barbados, he called an emergency meeting known as the Demerara

[22] James, *West Indian Government* , 9.

[23] There was a single delegation that addressed both these parties during the Moyne Commission (the Trinidad Labour Party). C.O. 950/792 T.N.A./U.K and (the G&W.I.L.C.). C.O 950/766 T.N.A./U.K. Although Cipriani and Rienzi signed the memorandum for each respective party, the G&W.I.L.C. was the more radical of the two. The blue print for a Federated West Indies can be found with this organization. In this delegation, Rienzi was less vocal. However, when commissioners specifically addressed the Legislative Council, Rienzi stated many of the ideals found in the testimony of the G&WILC. Moreover, Cipriani was a registered member in both parties. Rienzi was also active member when the Moyne commissioners questioned the Federated Worker's Trade Union. The trade union demanded the right to peacefully picket, freedom from liability of tort, right to freedom of assembly, unemployment and national health insurance, old age pension, industrial schools, prison privileges to political Prisoners, adult franchise and a reduction of Legislative Council qualifications. Petitioners stated that a cleavage existed between the government and the governed, and that the unrest would continue as long as workers were compelled to live under adverse conditions. "Labour's voice is becoming more articulate. Workers are not only anxious to be rid of the swaddling bonds of Capitalistic oppression, but also yearning to live in an atmosphere of unparalleled freedom of man." Memorial Federated Worker's Trade Union. C.O. 950/766. T.N.A./U.K.

[24] Legislative Council of Trinidad. (W.I.R.C. 1939). C.O. 950/806 T.N.A./U.K.

Conference in November 1938. Together they engineered the blueprint for a Federated West Indies that placed voting power in the hands of the people. It was a scheme to unite Trinidad, British Guiana, Jamaica, Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, Monsterrat, St. Kitts, Nevis, the Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and British Honduras into a single nation. [25] The consensus was that many of the economic problems would be solved by Federation. Nominally, the Governor- General, as representative of the King, would be the figurehead of such a union. But whereas in the past, when members of the Legislative Council both official and unofficial were nominated by the governor, there would now be fifty-two representatives making up the Federal Legislative Council. Each island would nominate its quota of representatives from a group elected by the people. The fifty-two nominees would have control of over issues ranging from trade and commerce, communication, land settlement schemes, immigration, agriculture and fisheries, to currency.[26]

Like James, Rienzi knew that the political, economic and social problems facing West Indians would only be solved if electoral power was in the hands of the people. In practice, West Indians had to be in control of their own industries, most notably oil. At this time, Rienzi spearheaded the movement for Federation by being an active participant during the Moyne Commission, and also by working for the trade unions. In 1938, John Jagger MP was part of a tribunal in which he acted as a mediator between representatives of Kern Oilfields- a major oil company in Trinidad- and representatives of the O.W.T.U led by Rienzi, over the issue of increasing wages. In the midst of these meetings, the N.W.C.S.A took to the street corners yelling "Demonstrate your solidarity"[27]!, Smash the bosses!, Smash the government which is the tool of the capitalist!" By using his legal skills, Rienzi successfully got a wage increase, and was even honoured in a calypso by Conrad called the "Tribunal" where Rienzi

[25] David Lowenthal, *The West Indies Federation. Perspectives of a new Nation* (Connecticut, 1961).
[26] Constitution for a Federated West Indies. T.L.P. W.I.R.C. (1938-1939) C.O. 950/792.T.N.A./U.K
[27] John Jagger, *Trinidad and the Tribunal. November 1938-Feb. 1939:a descriptive diary* (London, 1939), 51.

was named Galahad.[28] However, arbitration was not enough. Rienzi wanted to make Jagger see the deteriorating conditions in Trinidad. Jagger noted in his diary that Rienzi was anxious to let tribunal members see some of the barracks where the sugar workers lived. Jagger, whose only knowledge of Trinidad lay in Blue Books, charts, maps of Trinidad and business reports from oil companies remarked: "I had thought that I had seen the worst that anyone could show in housing conditions when we went round the oilfields, but I must hand it to the sugar firms for absolute filth, ignoring of any kind of sanitary conditions whatever and for general misery."[29] He summed up the presence of the British colonial interests when he wrote: "Now I feel disposed to say that the Colonial service is in the main staffed by indolent, indifferent mediocrities who are quite well in meaning but who have neither the courage to govern nor the capacity to lead." [30]

Rienzi submitted that unless there was "revolutionary change from Crown colony to self-government, it would be difficult if not impossible to improve the social conditions of the masses."[31] Economic stability rested with a drastic change in Crown Colony government. West Indians had to be in control of the industries to which they had supplied their labour. In fact, he refused to sign the memorandum agreed upon by his colleagues in the T.L.P. and G&W.I.L.C., for the document merely reiterated the present constitutional position of the colony. They agreed that a form of adult suffrage should be introduced in which both the financial and property qualification of voters as well as elected members should be *progressively* reduced by 50 %; this option was not soon enough for Rienzi, as he argued that time and time again, the people had requested reforms in social legislation but the government always replied in the negative. Firstly, he acknowledged that Trinidad was run by

[28] *Ibid.* 53
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*64
[31] Minority Report Legislative Council. W.I.R.C (1938-1939). C.O. 950/806. T.N.A./U.K. See also John Gaffar La Guerre, 'The Moyne Commission and the West Indian Intelligentsia' (Institute of Commonwealth Studies Post graduate seminar. Decolonization and Small states with special reference to the West Indies, 1971).

a plutocracy in which there was an alliance between the Legislative Council and the planters and businessmen in the oil industry. Rienzi cited members of the Legislative Council as dealers in the oil businesses. Members included Mr Lavington, Fred Grant and his brother in law Mr Forbes (Apex Oil), Sir Lennox O'Reilly, and Mr Kelshall who was a solicitor in one of the banks in San Fernando.[32] There was an inextricable link between industry and political power, and it was only by enfranchising the masses through elected representation, that power would be re-distributed.

Rienzi argued that the end of Crown rule would enable the country to prosper. When the Moyne commissioners suggested that self-rule in Trinidad would cause overseas investors to see Trinidad as unstable politically, which would then cause them to revoke any financial investment, Rienzi replied: "I see no reason why it should not. The persons who come forward and seek the votes of the people are not persons who have who have any desire to run this country to ruin or bankruptcy, but to make this country prosperous."[33] Trinidad was a prosperous country and its wealth must be in the hands of the people. He further argued that "revenue could come from export taxes placed on products like oil. Moreover there was other capital in Trinidad that overseas investors could be attracted to. However, all the Crown lands have been given on leases to the oil companies without drilling obligations. Almost all the Crown lands have been tied up by the companies and foreign companies and British companies are desirous of coming in but then are unable to do so because the land is already tied up".[34] In other words, Trinidad was in a noose in which its own economic and political development was stifled by businessmen whose interests were legitimized by the Crown structure. The ultimate solution was the nationalisation of the oil company that would facilitate the process of self-government. If Trinidad's government were to put a penny a gallon on gasoline, it would bring in about two million pounds a year. Further, if a 2 % duty

[32] Legislative Council, Trinidad. W.I.R.C. (1938-1939). C.O. 950/806. T.N.A./U.K.
[33] *Ibid.*
[34] *Ibid.*

were levied on petroleum products, it would raise another half million dollars a year. At this time, the people in Trinidad were made to pay an excise of eighteen cents on petroleum, while the foreign purchaser of petroleum paid very little. Rienzi argued that if Trinidad's citizens had control over tariff policy where industries such as oil and sugar "were draining the wealth of the colony, they could contribute a fair share of that which they are draining out of the colony."[35] The oil industry in Trinidad was no longer in its infancy. Some companies were receiving dividends of 30-80%. Trinidad's government did not demand an export tax on oil. Rienzi stressed that Trinidadians could no longer enter into treaties "non volens" (unwillingly), especially those pertaining to its own industries. He further stated that Trinidad did not belong to foreign oil companies: "They find the oil here but they have not brought the oil with them and if the oil was not here, they could find it. We want something for the oil. In the same way, the British exchequer gets something for the income tax on oil."[36] In theory, with Federation, control over tariff policy would enable Trinidad to financially support other islands, thus creating a reason for islands to support the idea of self-government. In Rienzi's mind, there was an inextricable relationship between economic and political sovereignty. However, his vision was not shared by others. First there were hints of problems associated with his leadership. In the popular federal elective council there would be fifty-two members in which each island would have a quota of representatives: Jamaica 9; Trinidad 8; British Guiana 7; Barbados 7; Grenada 3; British Honduras; 3 the Bahamas 3; Dominica 2; Antigua 2; St. Kitts-Nevis 2; St. Vincent ;2 St. Lucia 2; Montserrat 1; and the Virgin Islands 1. Even before the constitution had been drawn up, several representatives from the other islands decided to enter into a federation of their own. As Trinidad was economically superior, it could stand on its own.

[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*

Timothy Roodal along with Arthur Cipriani and Vivian Henry, the new secretary general of the T.L.P., kept their faith in Britain's trusteeship of Trinidad's industries and government. For the TLP, it was putting back the word "trust" back into the concept of trusteeship. Like Rienzi, Roodal did not distinguish between the plights of both races. With conviction, Roodal stated that "both races came to Trinidad under oppressive labour schemes, and indeed were affected by the "economic strangulation culminating in poverty, hunger, and pre-mature death."[37] To him, money was being thrown at improving machinery, but little thought was given to the "human" industry, meaning labour.[38] Vivian Henry argued that subsidizing industries like cocoa, sugar with millions of dollars was not enough, as the peasant proprietors did not receive any benefits. There was not enough protection given to British West Indian sugar over foreign production. In a similar vein, the millions of pounds of cocoa which were exported from Trinidad no longer yielded profit since West African-produced cocoa was being produced at a cheaper rate.

British commissioners warned Henry that if they increased subsidies/preferences for these industries so that minimum wages would be the same in the West Indies and Britain, the ultimate burden would be on the British taxpayer. In an exchange of questions and answers, the British challenged Henry's proposals in that they would cost the British government and its peoples tens of millions of pounds. They were taken aback by Henry's suggestion that the British exchequer was responsible for raising the level of life to an equal level between the West Indians and the British consumers. Henry retorted that if Britain still prided itself on

[37] TLP and G&WILC. WIRC (1938-1939). C.O. 950/766 and C.O 950/792.T.N.A/U.K. Rienzi did participate with the TLP and G&WILC during the Moyne Commission; however, in this capacity, he restricted his arguments for the repeal of the Seditious Publications Ordinance. For further discussion on the relationship between the TLP and other participating bodies during the Moyne Commission see Brinsley Samaroo, 'Trinidad Labour Party and the Moyne Commission' in Blanca Silvestrini (ed.), *Politics, Society and Culture in the Caribbean*. (Puerto Rico, 1983), 240-255.
[38] *Ibid*.

being trustees, they should be committed to raising the standard of living of West Indians equal to that or even higher than that of the British.[39]

Both groups were operating under very different ideas of trusteeship. For Roodal and the TLP, trusteeship meant that the British had a high degree of responsibility towards the social welfare of West Indians. The notion of trusteeship in the colony was bound up in economic schemes arranged by the British authorities to allow a reciprocal benefit in the profits generated by West Indian industries. This realization was given further weight when Cipriani and Roodal turned to social schemes such as compulsory education, the abolition of child-labour and the introduction of minimum wage law. These ideas were met with negative responses from the British who wanted the phrases that these proposed ideas were being couched in to be "translated into £.s.d."[40] This face- to- face exchange of words between representatives of the British Empire and their West Indian subjects illustrated a fundamental clash of views.

On the question of Federation and self-government, the TLP remained committed to constitutionalism. Unlike Rienzi who wanted Independence, the TLP had no desire to divorce Trinidad from the British government.[41] The management of the colony's resources would still be in British hands. In emotive tones, Henry conveyed that "there is not a man in this colony that would not fight to the last drop of his blood in order to preserve his protection under the British flag."[42] Even during the 1937 disturbances, Henry had placed his trust in the Governor in an endeavour to help eliminate trouble. Similarly, Roodal placed his hopes in the benevolence of the Crown that sought to defend the rights of East Indians.

[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid*.
[42] *Ibid.*

IV. Indians and the West Indian Royal Commission

As East Indian members of the Legislative Council, both Rienzi and Roodal were interested in the overall national agenda with regards to changes in the Crown colony structure. British commissioners informed Legislative Council members that there were fears that if the "East Indian masses were enfranchised, they would predominate."[43] Previously, in the elections for the district of Caroni, the candidate who lost to Sarran Teelucksingh (a member of the EINC) argued that the only reason why he lost was that the district was predominantly East Indian. Rienzi and Roodal reassured the commissioners that East Indians were capable of voting for qualified candidates of another race given that East Indians only formed one-third of the population. [44]

Nominal East Indian organizations such as like the East Indian Advisory Board (EIAB),[45] the Presbyterian Council of Trinidad and the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha (SDMS), felt that Rienzi and Roodal's preoccupation with the overall constitutional future of Trinidad and the West Indies did not address the local problems faced by ordinary East Indian peasants. These organizations were led by Christian (Presbyterian), Hindu and Muslim East Indians who preferred communal representation on the basis that East Indians formed one-third of the population of the colony. A visible presence of East Indians in the Legislature would ensure that this section of the population was involved in all governmental matters. But even in this camp, there were differences of opinion. The religious organizations felt that religious rights of East Indians were not being recognized which, in turn, denied them citizenship of the British Empire. It was through the religious characteristics of the leadership of these organizations that national politics in India acquired a new intensity. This

[43] Legislative Council, Trinidad (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939). C.O. 950/806. T.N.A./U.K.
[44] *Ibid.*
[45] This board was created by former governor of Trinidad Sir Murchison Fletcher. Members from this board were previously came from the E.I.N.A. and E.I.N.C.

subsequently attracted immediate British intervention on behalf of the East Indians in Trinidad.

Following the end of indentureship, official communication between the Government of India, and the Colonial and Indian offices over the political, social and economic concerns of Indians in Trinidad was less intense. However, this was to change somewhat following the creation in 1922 of the Indian Overseas Association; this organization was an outgrowth of the Imperial Indian Citizenship Association based in Bombay.[46] It dealt with matters affecting Indians residing in the British self-governing colonies, dependencies and protectorates, and thus was concerned with key areas like South Africa, Kenya, Fiji and British Guiana. Indians living in these areas faced overt racist policies, and had significant problems in gaining access to land. Representatives of Hindu and Muslim organizations operating in India in the mid-1920s, visited Trinidad to enquire into matters pertaining to East Indians, and individual leaders then pressured the Government of India to intervene on matters pertaining to Trinidad. The main issue that dominated was marriage together with anoverall recognition of religious rights.

The registration and legal recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages was directly linked to land inheritance. In the *East Indian Herald*, a petition was made by Mr Ashraf Hasan Ali of Victoria Village, whose father had died intestate. Ali tried to receive a portion of his father's estate; however, according by colonial law in Trinidad, he was an illegitimate heir because his parents married under "Mohammedan rites". Even through the property was bought in 1902, in cases where Indians died intestate the land reverted to the Crown and was administered by the Administrator General. Ali was only able to get a portion of the estate when he paid the commission to the Administrator General. However, the oil rights

[46] Indians Overseas Association, 1919-1922. I.O.R.L/P&J/6/1635 File 6823. B.L.

associated with the land remained in the hands of the government.[47] From 1921to 1930, only seventy-five marriages were registered amongst non-Christian East Indians.[48] Moreover, in 1931, the Crown was in charge of administering the estates of over sixty-seven Indians who had died intestate with assets worth over £1,744 17s 8d.[49] The inability for Indians to access land was intrinsic to the debate when Trinidad's government decided to introduce marriage and divorce legalisation. Between 1924 and 1935, Trinidad's government sought to introduce divorce legislation throughout the colony. For these proceedings to take place, all marriages including non-Christian East Indian marriages, would have to be registered. The registration of Hindu and Muslim marriages was a persistent problem both during and after the indentureship phase. The crux of the debate was the civil versus the religious nature of the marriage union, which then divided East Indian opinion, attracted a great deal of Indian responses and gave rise to the Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha (SDMS).

Marriages amongst non-Christian Indian migrants had to be registered. As early as 1873, a draft bill had been introduced to regularize all marriages in Trinidad amongst Asiatic immigrants. It was strongly opposed by the Government of India which viewed indentureship as a form of employment that had nothing to do with the personal law of immigrants from which marriage traditions were derived.[50] Subsequently, it was Reverend Morton who took up the marriage issue during his missionary work in Trinidad. Aware of the marriage problem amongst East, he submitted a paper to the government in 1877 entitled 'Remarks on the State

[47] *East Indian Herald*, October 1919, 'Mr Ashraf'. N.A.T.T. See also J.C. Jha 'The Background of the Legalisation of Non-Christian Marriages in Trinidad and Tobago" in Bridget Brereton and Winston Dookeran (eds.), *East Indians in the Caribbean* (St. Augustine, 1975), 117-139.
[48] Number of marriages calculated from Annual Reports of Immigrants in Trinidad from Protector of Immigrants. I.O.R. L/E/7/1283. B.L.
[49] Administration Report for the Protector of Immigrants, Trinidad. Dept. E,H& L-(Overseas Branch). Proceedings 23-24 Part B. 1931, G.O.I/ N.A.I. Between 1929 and 1933 over 3,712 estates reverted to the Crown from East Indians who died intestate and of which the value was over £13 06115s 11d.
[50] Marriage Law applicable to Indians in Trinidad. Question and Answer in Legislative Assembly. Complaint by the Punjab Sanatana Dharam Pratindhi Sabha that this is not in accordance with the guarantee given by the Trinidad Government at the time of emigration from India to that colony was first permitted. E&H-(L&O) File No. 290-2 ,1932. G.O.I. /N.A.I.

of Indians.' Morton made a number of suggestions on how best to encourage legal marriages among East Indians and to protect their conjugal rights. He proposed that an ordinance should be passed providing for the registration of Indian husbands and wives when they arrived, and also for the rest of the population who were residing in the colony and were either already married or wanting to get married. Morton urged that the latter should do so in the churches or before wardens, as the other classes of the community readily did so.[51] Morton's motion was approved, and subsequently in 1881, an ordinance was introduced to regulate marriages amongst Indian immigrants. It was the first colonial legislation of its kind, and the Colonial Office was sufficiently impressed to propose making it the model to be adopted other colonies where Indian migrants resided. However, the ordinance proved to be unsuccessful since few Indian immigrants registered their marriages. Successive inquiries were made into this matter coming from Surgeon-General Comins in 1893, and Messrs. Chimman Lal and McNeil in 1913-1915. In the 1916 London Conference dealing with Indians overseas, it was advised that Hindu Priests and Muslim Kazis be given the right to be marriage officers; however, this still failed to convince all Indians to register their marriages. In both the ordinances of 1881 and 1916marriages contracted between non-Christian immigrants had to be registered in the colony regardless of personal law.[52]

In the interwar period, East Indians in Trinidad were divided on this matter. Through his career under the time period for this project, Rienzi did not address the marriage issue as his main concerns were centred on the trade unions and the national agenda for self-government. On the other hand, members of the EINC and EINA lead by Sarran Teelucksingh and Reverend Charles David Lalla consistently petitioned the government for the recognition of Hindu and Muslim marriages. However, the matter was tacked onto the

[51] Sarah Morton, *John Morton of Trinidad: pioneer missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Canada to the East Indians in the British West Indies* (Toronto, 1916), 187.
[52] See Marriage and Divorces Act, 1881. C.O 297/10 and Trinidad Immigration Ordinance 1916 . C.O. 297/21. T.N.A./U.K.

larger agenda of securing communal representation in the colony and did not receive much attention. Hence it fell to private individuals from the Hindu and Muslim communities to specifically address this problem. In 1924, Legislative Council member Lennox A.P O'Reilly proposed the introduction of the Indian Marriages and Divorces Act as a means to assimilate non-Christian East Indian marriages to the wider scheme of divorce in the colony. The object of the Bill was to legitimize the children of unregistered marriages, contracted according to Hindu and Mohammedan rights.[53] The Bill was met with hostility with prominent Hindus and Muslims. Private individuals from each religious body successfully petitioned the government to not go through with the Bill. [54] The Governor therefore decided to postpone the introduction of the bill until its effect was more generally understood.

The consolidation and public function of the (S.D.M.S.) was an outlet for those concerned about religious rights. Early Muslim organizations in Trinidad like Tackveeyatul Islamic Association (T.I.A.) lead by Moulvi Ameer Ali found solidarity with their Hindu co-patriots. Muslims found mutual interest with the S.D.M.S. and were absorbed by that organization. [55] Also, a series of visits from Pundit Mehta Jaimini of India who was a follower of the Arya Samaj movement was also important. In nineteenth century India, Arya Samaj was a Hindu reformist movement in which adherence to the Hindu Vedas and the establishment of the Vedic schools were its trademarks. This itinerant Hindu emissary held workshops, gave lectures and published his teachings on the Vedas in several serials (for example, the *East Indian Weekly*) to foster Hindu solidarity. The Hindu Mahasabha evolved from temple gatherings in San Fernando, Penal and Tunapuna. Interestingly, in 1928, Adrian Cola Rienzi (then known as Krishna Deonarine) was touted to become president of this

[53] Mr. J. W, Bhore Legislative Assembly Debates, India. The Indian Divorces Act in Trinidad Marriages in Trinidad I.O.R. L/E/7/1385 1921-1940. B.L.
[54] *Labour Leader*, 14 June, 1924, 'Hindu and Muslim marriages'.N.A.T.T.
[55] T.I.A. published pamphlets like the *Comforter* (1933) that marked the emergence of the Muslim community in Trinidad. These pamphlets contained teachings from Islam, news from India, and any meetings of Muslims of Trinidad. N.A.T.T.

branch. [56] Any Trinidadian regardless of what branch of Hinduism he or she belonged to, was eligible for membership to the Mahasabha whether he was a Sanatanist, Aryan Samajist, Kabirpanthhi or Seonarayani. Moreover, the Mahasabha was affiliated to the All Indian Hindu Mahasabha in India so that Hindus in Trinidad could be in constant touch with important events in India.[57] Early leaders of the SDMS included T.R. Mahabirsingh and Satynarayan Maharaj who claimed that "we in Trinidad are gradually losing our language, customs and religion-not only that but our individuality also. By teaching our boys and girls to read and write Hindi, properly in addition to English which is taught them in the schools, it will help them to grow within the restraining influences of Indian civilization and culture." [58] Although it was not a political organization in nature as yet, the Hindu Mahasabha was a conduit for forces intent on preserving the religious rights of Trinidad's citizens as conceded by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The SDMS was a grass-roots organization that was being built up with influences from India and political pressures in Trinidad in which a lack of adherence to religious rights engendered a sentiment of being disenfranchised.

Between 1928 and 1935, the marriage question gained significance following the introduction of limited franchise in 1923. The resurfacing of the marriage/divorce question and the raising of the marriage age in India pertaining to Hindus made this issue complex.[59] The personal act of marriage became entangled in the developments of anti-colonial nationalism that predominated during this time period. In 1928, F.E.M Hosein, the non-official member of the Legislative Council for the country of St. George, moved a resolution

[56] *E.I.W.*'The Hindu Mahasabha, San Fernando Branch', May, 1928. N.A.T.T.
[57] *Ibid*. 14, July, 1929 'Penal News Development of Hindu Mahasabha'.
[58]*Ibid.*
[59] The age of consent in correspondence between 1881 and 1934 was 16 for men and for women between the ages of 12 and 13. See sections on marriage in C.O 297/10-21. T.N.A/U.K. and I.O.R. L/E/7/1385. B.L.The age of consent was not the strongest argument in marriage and divorce legislation. However, in 1928 the Trinidad government did ask the Government of India via the India office for any material in India regarding this matter. Pundits, Sanatanists and leaders of the Arya Samaj were consulted in this matter. Previously in 1927, at the All-India Sanatan Dharam Conference in Allahabad under the leadership of Pundit Mohan Maliviya, it was recommended that girls should not be married before 12. Religious texts from the Arya Samaj such as the Satyartha Praksash written by the leader of the reformist movement Swami Dayanand were also used. Dept. E,H&L to Economic and Overseas Dept. India Office. 1930. I.O.R. L/E/7/1385. B.L.

that more effectual registration of all Hindu and Muslim marriages be carried out to safeguard the status of the children of such marriages with reference to the inheritance of property.[60] Hosein's plan appealed to both Hindu and Muslim East Indians in Trinidad. The reluctance amongst East Indians to register their marriages arose from the conflation of the civil act of marriage and the religious aspect. Many East Indians, who specifically identified themselves as Hindu and Muslim, did not see the separation while others did. In the *East Indian Weekly*, a correspondent under the pseudonym "Vox Populi" acknowledged that that "Hindus and Muslims were labouring under two great disadvantages: one is that their offspring are stigmatised as illegitimates. It would appear to any foreigner who by chance sees the births statistics on the Indians that they are living in concubinage."[61] Secondly, the children of these unions suffered further in that they could not get land. The writer charged one Muslim leader, Mr. Gowhar Ali, with viewing this matter from a strictly religious and dogmatic perspective in "that any devout religionist who did not look towards the general welfare of his people in times of distress is neither serving his religion nor his God in the proper way."[62] In the same way that Hosein viewed the limited franchise as denationalizing Indians in Trinidad that stigmatized them as illegitimates, so the rhetoric used during debates on the marriage issue had a similar effect. Thus, the discussions on Muslim and Hindu marriages were woven into the discourse of colonial politics.

Between 1931 and 1932, Trinidad's government aggressively pursued the issue of divorce legislation. Some East Indians like Sarran Teelucksingh, separated the civil and religious nature of marriage, and welcomed divorce legislation. In a meeting in the Couva Electric Theatre, Teelucksingh pressed East Indians to weigh the legal aspects of the case: "Divorce legislation would resolve any anomalies of those who came from failed marriages. If in Trinidad there were broken marriages, marriage officers would have the privilege to

[60] *EIW*, June 2nd, 1928, 'Notes of Interest, Registration of Hindu and Muslim marriages'. N.A.T.T.
[61] *Ibid*. November 1928, 'Response to Gowhar Ali'
[62] *Ibid.*

have to dissolve those bona fide unfortunate cases and also have in their midst a clean moral people not stigmatised."[63] Armed with their Qur'ans and Vedas, Hindus and Muslims after hearing Teelucksingh, resolved that divorce was a good solution provided that this service was in the hands of Muslim Kazis and Hindu priests. Separately, another group of Muslims and Hindus adamantly stated that divorce legislation would interfere with their religious rights. To them, these rights were enshrined in the various Immigration Ordinances regardless of the fact that indentureship was over. Leading East Indian Muslims and Hindus including Haji Rookmuddin Meah, a Muslim Kazi, Seereram the local Hindu leader who would play a part in the 1934 sugar strikes, and several other pundits, cabled Mohandas K. Gandhi. The cable read: "One Hundred Thousand threatened with interference religious rights by the introduction of divorce law. See telegram to Mahatma Gandhi and use influence of colonial office on behalf of our Mathura Pundit, Trinidad." [64] The petition of this faction was bolstered by the Sanatan Dharam Pratindhi Sabha, Punjab (SDPS) an organization formed in 1860, and was operating in Lahore. Patrons of this body included Shri Pundit Madan Mohan Maliviya who was a prominent spokesman during the anti-indentureship debates.[65] Indentureship incurred a racial stigma on Indians who went to the colonies, and now to address the religious institution of marriage the same language of stigma and illegitimacy was employed specifically for those Indians who affirmed their Hindu and Muslim faiths. The SDPS was lead by Rai Bahadur Lala Ram Saran Das who declared that as a rule, East Indian Hindus did not like to get their marriages registered because it was contrary to their customs and faith. The physical act of registration was in conflict with the promises made by the Government of

[63] *L.L.* 18, April, 1930, 'Sarran Teelucksingh and Divorce'. N.A.T.T.
[64] Reuter's Government and Press Telegram. Divorce in Trinidad. 1931 Dept. E,H&L (Overseas Branch). File 70-79. G.O.I/ N.A.I.
[65] Marriage Law applicable to Indians in Trinidad. Question and Answer in Legislative Assembly. Complaint by the Punjab Sanatana Dharam Pratindhi Sabha that this is not in accordance with the guarantee given by the Trinidad Government at the time of emigration from India to that colony was first permitted. Dept. E&H-(L&O) File No. 290-2 ,1932. G.O.I./ NAI

India and the Crown colony government that had been predicated on the concept of imperial citizenship which implied that religious rights would be protected.

The intervention of the SDPS in the marriage issue also played a role in questions of leadership in the SDMS. In 1932, the SDMS was formally recognized as a Friendly Society. Pundits Sahadeo Tiwari Sharma, Balgobin and Ramnarine of Arouca, Sarran Teelucksingh and several others were elected to become trustees of the newly consolidated SDMS Board of Control. They were also wealthy proprietors in Trinidad, mostly in the mercantile enterprises, and thus had a dual role which included being respected leaders in the Hindu community.[66] Their job was to propagate the tenets of Hinduism according to the Holy Vedas, to establish Madrassars (Hindu and Muslim schools), to teach their members their rights under the British Crown and to strengthen sentiments of loyalty to the Crown. Teelucksingh's wish to be incorporated as trustee did not arouse controversy amongst the SDMS when he stated: " I stand here as the son of a pagan because my father died as a pagan, and I hope he will rise from his grave and be proud that he was defended by a Christian son".[67] However, it was Ram Saran Das of the SDPS who protested that Teelucksingh's Christian character prevented him not only from being a leader in the SDMS, but also from truly representing the religious needs of Hindus in Trinidad. Colonial authorities in London refused to intervene on this matter, but in 1937, when the West Indian riots broke out, the intervention of the SDPS sparked colonial authorities in London to intervene in the West Indies regarding the question of East Indians throughout the region.

News of the recommendations of the Forster Commission and the plight of East Indians during the strikes of 1937 spread to India, renewing interest in their situation. This transnational link was vital to pressuring the Colonial Office and India Office to solve problems affecting East Indians. The Indian newspaper *The Servant of India* deemed that

[66] Hindu Sanatan Dharma Association of Trinidad, 1932. I.O.R. L/P&J/8/ File 318. B.L.
[67] *Ibid*.Sanatan Dharam Pratidhi Sabha to India Office.

solutions to land settlement, education and labour disputes were imperative. Correspondents from the newspaper acknowledged that the formation of trade unions was important, but the distrust of local officials would constantly hinder East Indian efforts to harness opportunities for change. With regard to this particular issue, the author writes:

> The distrust of local officials has a special significance for India. As the Commission puts it (paragraph 17), 'the labour engaged in agriculture is mostly East Indian, and that engaged in the oil industry mostly West Indian, and according to the Commission, there are as many as 72,500 employees in agriculture against 9,000 in the oil industry.' The great majority of labourers are then Indians towards whom the Government in India and the people of India have special responsibility. This responsibility can be adequately discharged if the Government of India has its own Crown Agent in Trinidad.[68]

Trade unions were organized on a racialized craft basis. If trade unions were created and supported by the government, representative leaders would be selected by the government and would serve only the needs of the oil and sugar industries. Those unions that were led by "good boys" would negotiate with employees and those unions that led by "bad boys" such as Uriah Butler would not be registered leaving only those unions that could be controlled by industries. The conclusions drawn from Indian interests were that East Indians were unorganised, and in the minority; in short, they could not exercise any influence in Trinidad or London. Therefore, the presence of an agent from the Government of India would be a neutral party, and would be responsible for giving accurate reports to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on any progress that was made to alleviate working conditions.[69.]

The disturbances in the West Indies piqued the interested parties within the Indian government for they were concerned that the interests of East Indians were not being met. Information spread that East Indians were labouring under oppressive conditions and were receiving meagre wages. Members of the Indian government clamoured for an observer to

[68] *Servant of India,* 14, April , 1938. I.O.R L/P&J/8/File 318. B.L.

[69] *Ibid*.

take part in the Moyne Commission, and stressed solidarity between Indians and East Indians in Trinidad and in British Guiana. Council Chamber member Sir Phiroze Sethna stated:

> Both these colonies are important for the economic prosperity of the British Empire. The oilfields in Trinidad are vital in the organization of defence of the British Empire. I submit that it is the duty of the British and Indian government to take every step to safeguard the interests of Indian labourers. What is wanted is not that they should be mere hewers of wood and drawers of water, but as decent citizens who enjoy a fair standard of existence...The Indian labourers contribute to their economic prosperity but they do not seem to enjoy any of the rights of citizenship...Sir, as I consider the wretched condition of these countrymen of ours, I cannot but have a feeling that the principle of equality and equal citizenship is yet conspicuous by its absence in there and in some parts of the British Empire. In our own country, we have been working with steady progress and advancing with fair rapidity on the path of self- government. But the condition of our countrymen in these colonies represents a contrast which cannot but excite our feelings to a high statement of resentment.[70.]

As leader of the SDPS, Ramsaran Das also voiced his concern to the Indian government as he had previously dealt with the marriage question of Indians in Trinidad. He stated that the "conditions of Indians was not good at all and that their representations to the Government do not get any response...We fully recognise that we cannot dissociate ourselves from the welfare of these men who went with our consent from here. It has been and continues to be, the policy of the Government of India to watch anxiously over the disabilities, the needs and aspirations of their nationals abroad."[71] Religious leaders who served as conduits of information on the well-being of Indians abroad were involved in not only the religious affairs of Trinidad, and the political trajectory of various East Indian groups. These statements prove that the welfare of Indians in the Crown Colonies was of great importance in strengthening India's movements to gain equal membership within the Empire.

Interestingly, "Hewers of wood and drawers of water" was the exact phrase Rienzi used to describe the plight of West Indians workers. The similarity in language surely proves that there was mutual interest in the plight of East Indians in the Caribbean. However, Rienzi, by virtue of not identifying as an East Indian, sought to absorb this section into the wider West Indies and remained quiet on the issue of marriage.

[70]Council of Chamber Debates Vol. II No. 4. 9 September, 1938. I.O.R. L/P&J/8 File 338. B.L.
[71] *Ibid*.

In 1938, in response to the many problems in the West Indies, the British government commissioned Lord Moyne to investigate grievances specifically affecting East Indian labourers. The decision to appoint an Indian representative on the West Indian Royal Commission led to a debate between the Government of India, and the India and Colonial offices. The status of East Indians in the British Caribbean was seen as having an influence on keeping good relations with India in order to avoid an upsurge of political upheaval in India. As part of the Commission, Johnathan Dawes Tyson, who was the private secretary for the Governor in Bengal, was given the task to look at issues concerning East Indians in Trinidad, British Guiana and Jamaica.

In a personal letter, G.S. Bajpai of the Government of India, Education, Health and Lands Department wrote to J.C Walton concerning the upcoming West Indian Royal Commission. He stated:

> We are being pressed here to ask for the inclusion of an Indian representative in the commission. Personally, I am not in favour of this and think we would be very much on stronger ground in asking if the Government of India should be allowed to send an observer with the Commission in order to hold a watching brief for them and also, if required, to assist the Indian communities in British Guiana and Trinidad in particular to present their case. As you know, the Indians in these two Colonies are predominantly agriculturalists and only recently in connection with a proposal to repatriate certain Indians from British Guiana, we pressed upon the Colonial Office the desirability of exploring the possibility of preventing an large scale demand for such repatriation by the offer of facilities for land settlement.[72]

A representative of the Indian government, this person would have considerable leverage in preventing large scale repatriation; the officer would be in a position to assess the resources existing in the colonies that could be used to remedy working conditions for East Indians. Representatives from the Government of India did recognise that "considering the circumstances in which these East Indian communities came to settle permanently in the colonies, they had an obligation to give them assistance in placing their views before the Commission. They requested that they be permitted to depute someone to accompany the

[72] *Ibid.* Bajpai to J.C. Walton. 27, July, 1938.

Commission in its visits to British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica." [73] In a follow- up letter to Sir Cosmo Parkinson of the Colonial Office, it was reiterated that the selected representative should help Indians present their case to the Commission. It was suggested that "Indians in these territories lack educated leadership and in any case it seems probable that the Commission may obtain a clearer and more helpful appreciation of the facts regarding the local Indian communities, if the latter have the guidance and assistance of a nominee of the Government of India."[74] Politically, the Government of India would have control in making a decision as regards their representative in order to ensure their needs were being met.

Despite efforts to appoint a representative, the Colonial Office disapproved of having an observer of Indian affairs on the Commission, which was contrary to the Government of India. The Colonial Office wanted to keep matters related to the East Indian population of the West Indies separate from the problems between India and the Empire. For example, one letter stated the "reasons for this decision [to not have a representative] was that "the probability is that the Government of India is anxious to appoint this Observer mainly because if they do not they will be open to attack by the Congress as having failed to look after the interest of Indians overseas."[75] In trying to understand the Colonial Office's decision, in a private letter between Walton and Bajpai, Walton stated "since politically Indians do not form a separate community in the West Indies, but are absorbed in the general community, they do not require special provision to be made for them in connection with the present Royal Commission. From such indications as we have, there seems to have been recently a revival- or probably I should say an increase- of interest in the communities of the West Indies."[76.] It seems that the Colonial Office did not want to foster separatist politics

[73] *Ibid.* Part 2 of 3. Government of India, Department of Education, Health and lands to Secretary of India. Simla, 28 August, 1938.
[74.] *Ibid.* Private telegram Sir Cosmo Parkinson. 31 August, 1938.
[75.] *Ibid*. Public and Judicial Department. 9 September 1938. Colonial office decline to agree to the appointment if an Observer by the Government of India.
[76] *Ibid*. Letter Walton to Bajpai. 10, September 1938.

within East Indian communities for fear that alliances would be made with India, and that problems with India would spill onto the colonies and threaten peace efforts. This inference is strengthened by statements made in a letter to Malcolm MacDonald, in the Colonial office. The letter stated that the appointment of an observer would "emphasize racial distinctions in the West Indies."[77] This suggests that whoever was appointed would be seen as favouring the conditions of Indians, thereby putting the Colonial Office in a difficult diplomatic position in their mission to quell unrest in the West Indies.

The Colonial Office could not ignore the demands of an Indian representative for fear that the Indian masses would use the plight of East Indians in the West Indies to take a stronger stance on separatism. In the entourage of the Commission, there was no person who had knowledge of Indian conditions, and there would almost certainly be difficulties in India if an observer were to be refused an appointment. A further letter to Malcolm Macdonald states: "The adoption by the Colonial office in this matter of an attitude which implies that Indian politicians should not concern themselves with the fate of Indians in the Colonies is bound to strengthen the hands of those Indians who contend that membership in the Empire is valueless."[78] It would seem that the Colonial Office gave way for in trying to keep peaceful relations in the Empire, Jonathan Dawes Tyson, Governor Secretariat of Bengal was appointed because of his efforts in presenting evidence before the South African Selected Committee on Asiatics in the Transvaal in 1930.[79] The Colonial office trusted Tyson's knowledge in dealing with issues regarding South African Indians and India and his ability to use his expertise in assessing the issues pertaining to Indians in the Crown Colonies.

Both the Government of India and other Indian officials thought it was important to be aware of developments in Trinidad; however, the private letters between Tyson and his

[77] Ibid.Letter to Malcolm Macdonald, Colonial Office.

[78] *Ibid*. Letter to Malcolm Macdonald. 20, September 1938

[79] *Ibid*.Government of India, Department of Education, Health and Lands to Secretary of State for India. 6, October,1938.

family on his way to the Crown Colonies indicate that the Government of India was out of touch with East Indian communities in British Guiana and Jamaica. In one of his letters, he writes:

> From the talks I have had with Bajpai today and with Bozman, I can see that they know very little about the conditions over there and that I shall have to evolve my own policy and, worse yet, get consent to it by cable. It already seems that the Government of India has not been in touch with Indians since 1912. I hope that means that Indians there have no real grievances and are a fairly well-conducted lot. I shall be so far as concerned as the Government of India is concerned as Christopher Columbus re-discovering Jamaican Indians.[80]

In fact, on his voyage to Jamaica, he had to rely on Blue Books to obtain information on East Indian communities.[81] Tyson's thoughts on the status of East Indians in Trinidad, Jamaica and Guiana exposed the disregard the both the Colonial and India Office had for the well-being of East Indians.

V. East Indian Organizations and the West Indian Royal Commission

a) The EIAB and the Presbyterian Council of Trinidad

Although East Indians were dissatisfied with the apathy of the Colonial government when it came to implementing changes on the island, they still stressed their loyalty to the Empire. For example, individual members of the East Indian community were allowed to submit written evidence to the commission. James Mungal, who once belonged to the Indian National Party with Adrian Cola Rienzi, submitted his claims to the Moyne Commission. Mungal was born in Adjuurpurie, in the Central Province of Oudh and migrated to Trinidad for a better life. He was self-taught and became a tailor, an axe cutter and eventually a merchant. He became involved with the Presbyterian Church, and was one of the founders of both the Naparima College and the E.I.N.A. In his memorandum, he agreed that changes to agriculture in the colony must be implemented. However, he stressed his loyalty to the British

[80] Private Letters of J.D. Tyson. Government Secretariat of Bengal. Tuesday 28 November, 1938. Hotel Imperial, New Delhi. MSS EUR 341/30. B.L.
[81] *Ibid*. Aboard R.M.S. Strathallan At Sea Friday 9, December 1938.

Empire and stressed that it was the duty of the English government to provide not only for East Indians but for Indians as well on the subcontinent.[82]

With the help of Governor Murchison Fletcher, the E.I.A.B. (East Indian Advisory Board), was the newly consolidated organization that sought re-energize the defunct EINA and EINC.[83] The board was led by Sarran Teelucksingh and Syed Mohammed Hosein. The latter stated that he was not a labourer and had no personal experience on agriculture; rather, he was a film distributor.[84.] Moreover, some prominent members of the Muslim and Hindu community including Moulvi Ameer Ali and Pundit Ganesh Dutt and Pundit Piarilal- were listed as members of these boards. East Indian organizations like the E.I.A.B. and the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad emphasized the benefits of the indentureship in which the combination of work on the plantations and education was a means of improving the Indian character. In their memorandum they wrote:

> Both the East Indian and West Indian peoples were brought here from abroad. The former 93 years ago and the latter at an earlier age. They were of the primitive type to whom a wage of 25 cents per task was considered adequate in those earliest days. But the daily contact with their Western Employers and their mode of life, gradually resulted- whether consciously or unconsciously, in a psychological change of their own mode of primitive living, so that at the close of 93 years or more of this uninterrupted contact, their offspring do not any longer adopt the method of life as obtained among their primitive ancestors, but manifestly follow the western deal of their employers from every conceivable standpoint. The Western Education both of Church and State materially helped to influence the lives of the descendants of these people—not in accordance with the model as set by their ancestral forefathers, but to the habits and customs of Western people. To attain fully the western mode on the wages paid to primitive people, is our opinion the problem above and beyond all other problems, affecting the labouring masses of our Island home at the present day.[85]

Members of this board believed that East Indians had transcended their "primitive status" through migration. This status not only included harsh economic factors migrants which Indian migrants were turning from, but also their religion; conversion to Christianity meant

[82] Memorandum James Mungal (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939) C.O. 950/821. T.N.A./U.K.
[83] J.D. Tyson, *Report on the Condition of Indians in Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad*, 1938-1939, (Simla, 1945), 25. I.O.R. V/27/820/32. B.L.
[84.] *Ibid*. 22
[85.] Minutes from EIAB (East Indian Advisory Board), (WIRC, 1938-1939), C.O. 950/767. See also evidence from Indian Evidence Committee. (WIRC 1938-1939). C.O. 950/807. Both memoranda were submitted a different times during the commission; however each contained similar evidence.

improvement. They demonstrated that the socioeconomic position of East Indian labourers could only be improved if minor industries like having kitchen gardens, poultry farms and a means of sustainable rice- growing flourished.

Like its predecessors, the EIAB sought to improve the industries that gave East Indians financial independence. The lack of attention to these local industries coupled with wage discrepancies and other social ills had culminated in the strikes and disorder of 1937. Rice crops, which had formerly contributed to the economic well-being of East Indians, could no longer be depended upon to provide a remunerative return. This was mainly due to the variation in rainfall, the lack of a proper system of irrigation, pollution by oil companies in certain areas and occasional attacks by blight. Thus, rice, the main component in the diet of East Indian people ceased to be a reliable a dependable crop.[86] Arguably, the estate authorities did not want East Indian labourers diverting their attention from working on other cash crop, an attitude which stunted the growth of self-sustaining peasant industries. Tyson looked at the importation of ghee and asked why it was not possible for it to be locally produced. Syed Mohammed Hosein answered: "No it is not impossible, but the amount of milk we produce in this country is very little indeed, and therefore it is not sufficient for local consumption. The estate authorities will not encourage anything like that for the labourers living on the estates."[87] Hosein gave further evidence that the estate authorities did not allow East Indians to keep cows on the estate because owners feared their workers becoming economically independent.[88.]

East Indians also sought improvements in education. The Presbyterian Board led the work with the colonial government to change working conditions on the estates to raise the standards of education for East Indian children. Reverend B.D. Wallis, principal of Naparima

86. *Ibid.*
87 *Ibid.*
88 *Ibid.*

College and Reverend Charles David Lalla,[89] worked on behalf of the Presbyterian Ministry in Trinidad, and raised matters affecting East Indians before the Commission. Interestingly, they did not comment on the religious status of East Indians, but recognized that serious faults with agricultural industries were the cause of many problems affecting East Indians. Moreover, they focussed on East Indian youth; they argued that schools and jobs were the best means to provide financial security for East Indians.

Organizations like the Salvation Army or the Church Army would curtail the high amount of crime East Indian youth were involved in when they left school. These authorities would help East Indians find general work, and if that failed, these organizations would help them out. Compulsory education was the key to East Indian children becoming literate, but bad housing conditions, and the hours spent in the fields prevented them from attending school. As children lacked clothing and had only meagre means of sustaining a proper diet, many children could not attend classes. The Presbyterian delegation reported that parents were glad for their children to go to the school and church; they were anxious for their children to get educated, but unless they got clothing, parents would keep them at home. In hopes of educating children at an early age, the school age was raised to five years, but no provisions could be made because of a lack of money. Delegates lamented that children are "left in slums to spend the whole day in squalid conditions. When in the schools they were taken out of that position for some time. Now they are relegated to dirt and darkness."[90] Presbyterians also sought changes in the educational curriculum to keep East Indian boys and girls in school; it was thought that more efforts should made into getting boys and girls interested in scientific and practical agriculture thus enabling them to find employment in that sector. "Apart from having school gardens, children should be exposed to other handicrafts

[89] The Presbyterian Church in Trinidad. Social and Industrial Problems. (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939) CO 950/871. T.N.A./U.K.
[90] *Ibid.*

like carpentry that would instil in them the predisposition to those vocations."[91] To work on behalf of East Indians, Presbyterians worked within the colonial governmental framework in Trinidad by upholding the position of East Indians as labourers in agriculture.

Lack of education and rampant illiteracy led to numerous cases of "scale robbery" of sugar cane workers. Scale robbery entailed collusion between planters and East Indian workers that cheated labourers out of their wages. The first problem was that there was no uniform weight on the weighing devices when farmers brought their cane to the factory; some used 50 pound weights for the scale while others used 56. The illiterate farmer was therefore unable to read the receipt indicating the wage he had received for his work. Even though the labourer by his experience, feelings and instincts knew that his quota was correct, the data from the scale could not be refuted. As well, if a labourer was supposed to bring in two tons of cane, the planter would often only give wages for one ton. Behind the scenes, planters and another labourers who also brought in two tons of cane would strike deals in awarding them the missing one ton of cane to his list of two tons thus increasing certain quotas to three tons. High rates of illiteracy also led to many East Indians dying intestate because they did not learn to write a will.

The lack of schooling amongst East Indians was connected with the discussions and debates regarding the civil nature of marriages. Coupled with this was the firm notion that marriages amongst Hindus and Muslims were not registered because their marriage rights in India were not equal to those in Trinidad. Teelucksingh and others did address marriage, but only in the sense that legal troubles pertaining to land inheritance would result if the marriage was not registered.[92] They admitted that this was a contentious issue amongst religious

[91.] *Ibid.*
[92] E.I.A.B. (W.I.R.C.1938-1939). C.O 950/767. T.N.A./U.K.

Hindus, and that much work was being done to convince them to register their marriages so that their children could inherit land.[93]

Discrepancies in wages were also brought up by board members. Syed Mohammed Hosein voiced his dissatisfaction when he stated that Creole factory owners received more wages than East Indian sugar workers. To him, there was collusion between the planters and the colonial government who wanted East Indians tied to the plantation because Creole labourers "were not such good agriculturalists". [94] Present during this delegation was Sir Walter Citrine of the T.U.C. Citrine ascertained that the overall wage paid to all Trinidadians was fifty cents per day, a calculation that took into account both low skilled and highly skilled workers. Hosein replied that this was not the case and that the statistics the commissioners were working from included all West Indian workers. Both Teelucksingh and Hosein reprimanded the commissioners by stating that they solely represented the East Indian cause.[95] Discussions on wages amongst the East Indian community laid the ground work in racializing the East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian components of the island's population. For Teelucksingh and this faction, East Indians were entitled to proportional/communal representation in the Legislature out of consideration to their numbers in the colony and the important part that they played in the development of the colony of Trinidad after African emancipation.[96] In the Trinidad Civil Servant List for 1939, only three East Indians were on the Legislative Council: Timothy Roodal, for St. Patrick, Sarran Teelucksingh for Caroni and Adrian Cola Rienzi for Victoria. Of the 100 boards and committees in charge of colonial operations ranging from agriculture to pensions there were only twenty-four 4 East Indian representatives on these committees. For Teelucksingh, the historical presence of East Indian identity was sustained through the legacy of indentureship; and preservation of its legacy

[93] *Ibid.*
[94] *Ibid*
[95] *Ibid.*
[96] *Ibid.*

would be secured when East Indians obtained important positions in both local government bodies and the Legislative Council.

In sum, the vision of EIAB remained focussed on the East Indian community whose sinews were bound by displacement of Afro-Trinidadian labourers and the conversion practices of the Canadian Presbyterians. Its majority Christian, non-agricultural leadership alienated them from Hindu and Muslim who held fast to their belief in religious autonomy. Moreover, their preference for special status segregated East Indians and their communities from the rest of the working class in Trinidad during much-needed constitutional reform in the colony.

b) SDMS Board of Control

The Sanatan Dharma Maha Sabha's presence before the West Indian Royal Commission was a direct response to the EIAB because they failed to address questions of religion pertaining to Hindus and Muslims in Trinidad. To strengthen their position, the SDMS absorbed the Anjuman-Sunat al Jamat,(ASJA) which was another Islamic organization in Trinidad. [97] SDMS Board members professed to Tyson that "for this very reason, the Hindus consider and treat Dharma (commonly translated as religion in English) as their life breath and the most essential and fundamental thing. It is like a chord into the beads of a necklace keeping them together. It is like the stream of blood which runs through the whole system and feeds the same."[98] With the colonial government not recognizing their right to practice their cultural traditions, this represented an impediment to Hindus enjoying their rights as citizens. They charged the EIAB with not presenting issues regarding religion to the commission. By this time, the SDMS affiliated itself with the Servants of India Society that was established by G.K. Gokhale, who, like Malaviya, was an opponent of the indentured scheme.

[97] SDMS Board of Control (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939). C.O. 950/777. T.N.A./U.K.
[98.] *Ibid.*

To bolster their position, board members cited examples from Kenneth James Grant's autobiography *My Missionary Memories* (1923). Grant's work showcased the aggressive language used by Canadian Presbyterians to spread the word of Christianity. As seen in Chapter 2, Grant was a prominent Canadian Presbyterian who had helped to establish the Naparima Boys School and engaged in other enterprises to spread the Christian religion amongst East Indians. Grant wrote: "Already it has been pointed out that the schools open the way to the young. While they are at a tender age and before the vain traditions of their fathers possess their minds the missionary or his helper day after day present things in simple form."[99] To the Hindus and Muslims, the Christian missionary's activity was a slight against their religion that alienated East Indian children from their parents. Subsequently, Hindu and Muslim East Indian parents could only send their children to Christian schools because the colonial authorities and the Christians were in partnership, directing all grants for religious schooling to Christians. Additionally, if a student wanted to teach in a Christian school, or attain higher levels of education, conversion to Christianity was a prerequisite. In a handwritten letter to the Commission, H.J. Supersad gave evidence that education was lacking in the East Indian communities because local Muslim and Hindu schools did not receive funding.[100] East Indian parents preferred not to send their children to mission schools because they feared that their ancestral languages and religion would be lost. However, if East Indians did not convert to Christianity they would not be able to get jobs. Supersad wrote:

> At the Mission schools, Hindu and Muslim boys were encouraged to become pupil teachers and no questions of religion rose. It was only when they reached the stage to becoming assistants that the religious questions loomed and many had lost their jobs. Many took the line to become Christian, those who did not were cast off and some even had to go and work in the fields. Some non-Christians remained in staff and qualified for the certificate but were refused promotion. [101]

[99] *Ibid.* Also see Frederick Grant's *My Missionary Memories* (Toronto, 1923), 89, 90, 105
[100] H.J. Supersad. Letter to Commission. (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939). C.O 950/843.T.N.A./U.K.
[101]. *Ibid*.

There were attempts to open Hindu and Muslim schools, but financial aid was refused. Also, non-Christian Indians were in the minority on associations concerning education. In San Fernando, teachers who did not convert could not go beyond assistantship and had to work in Government schools. Lastly, if teachers were appointed to government schools, they were sent to remote country districts where there were no East Indians.[102] Supersad suggested that non-Christian religious bodies be given the same privileges as those of Christian denominations. Hindus and Muslims should get the same privileges and not be called upon to unite before getting any such privileges.[103] Supersad's arguments suggested that religious discord was the root cause of educational problems facing East Indians, as opposed to the prevailing economic conditions.

This organization maintained ties with India, through Dr Parashu Ram Sharma, a prominent pundit also from the SDPS, who made routine trips to Trinidad to oversee matters relating to Hindus. These enduring ties made the problems associated with marriage a matter which the colonial authorities could not ignore. Sharma wrote articles in the Indian Press describing the horrific conditions in which East Indians in Trinidad lived. He was a threat to the colonial government because his attendance to spiritual matters interfered with the way the Government of India and office in London dealt with East Indians in Trinidad. In a public meeting in Trinidad, he impressed upon the Government the dire need to teach Hindi as a compulsory subject, for language provided a tangible link to the subcontinent. In the *Hindu Madras Times,* Parashu Ram Sharma wrote that children of unregistered marriages were stigmatized because they were denied their inheritance. Wealth accumulated by East Indian families was taken away by the Government and the "children are naturally left helpless! And if the children are minors, Christian organizations are ready to convert them."[104]

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[102]. *Ibid*.
[103]. *Ibid*.
[104]. *Hindu MadrasTimes,* Parashu Ram Sharma, ' Blot of Illegitimacy on Indians Overseas', (W.I.R.C. 1938-1939). C.O 950/2.T.N.A./U.K.

Illegitimate marriages branded Indians as pariahs and virtual outcasts who were relegated to the outskirts of Trinidadian life. They appealed to the colonial administration to understand that their marriages were not registered because of religious purposes. SDMS Board leaders were questioned on the discrepancy between the legal and spiritual arguments of registering marriages, Tyson asked: "What is the objection of the Indian community to having marriage registered as a civil act after it has been celebrated religiously?"[105] Pundit Tiwari of the Board answered: "We say that there is a contract between the Government of India and the Government here, and that the Hindu marriage, or the Hindu religion be considered as every other religion, and on those grounds we say that a Hindu marriage should be considered valid without any registration...We consider that a Hindu marriage after having been performed by a Hindu pundit, is just as good as that performed by a religious sect".[106] Dame Rachel Crowdy, another member of the commission, furthered the confusion by interpreting the issue of marriage registration as indicative of East Indians wanting separation. She commented: "You do not want equal treatment with other marriages but you appear to want preferential treatment because the Catholic or Anglican or whatever it is has to be registered officially with the Government and you want yours not to be registered at all. Therefore you want preferential treatment to all other religious marriages throughout the island."[107] Tiwari answered back: "It is simply this, that when we comply with the local ordinance and have a bill prepared, it will be very hard because our Hindu Pundits are not qualified in English at all, and the local ordinance requires that everything must be prepared in English. Registering marriages is inconsistent with Hindu Law."[108] Tyson and Crowdy could not understand how registration of a marriage affected its validity which illustrated a clash of ideologies between the legal world of the colonial administration and the religious

[105.] *Ibid*.
[106]. *Ibid*
[107.] *Ibid.*
[108.] *Ibid*

reasoning of the Hindus in Trinidad. Dealings with the topic of marriage also divided East Indian leaders, in that East Indian leaders on the Advisory Board did not associate the Hindu Pundits or share their religious sentiments.

The SDMS's preoccupation with marriages did not preclude them from matters outside the East Indian community. With regard to the disturbances in Trinidad, board members firmly recognized that the wage discrepancy between East and West Indian was a tactic used by the colonial authorities to establish and accentuate the differences between the labouring masses. Pundit Sahadeo Tiwari stated that on the Tacarigua Road Board "the creole labourer (Afro-Trinidadian) gets 60-80 cents while the Indian only gets 50 cents."[109] Even in the factories when West Indians (Afro-Trinidadian) finished their shift the East Indian were said to do the exact same while getting paid less for it; the estate books illustrated this clearly. It was a means to engender "segregation between the two races and to prevent them from becoming a united front."[110] These insightful comments made by members of the SDMS show that their emphasis on religious rights did not blind them to the problems affecting the working masses in Trinidad. Rather, religious intolerance fed into overall systemic problem of East Indians being unable to become full participants in the welfare in the forging of Trinidad's political future.

VI. Johnathan Dawes Tyson and the West Indian Royal Commission

Tyson listened to first-hand reports from East Indians on what conditions were truly like in Trinidad. While members of the East Indian Advisory Board and the Presbyterian Council of Trinidad stressed issues related to wages and labour and land settlement, the SDMS Board of control stressed the importance of preserving Hindu culture. In a letter, he writes: "The Indians here are also more presentable (so far as we have met them) than the

[109] *Ibid*.

[110] Private Letters of J.D. Tyson. Government Secretariat of Bengal. Trinidad 25, Feb. 1939. 2 Kent House, Maraval, Port of Spain, Trinidad. MSS EUR 341/30.

Jamaican or British Guiana Indians, and we have succeeded in establishing friendly relations with them already. No doubt there will be some who will strike a discordant note, but I think the majority of them are pulling together."[111] At first glance, Tyson noted how the occupations of East Indian and African Caribbean stratified Trinidad society. Most East Indians worked on the plantations and had very little prospect of moving into the civil service, while African Caribbean workers were in charge of the factories.

> The Indian does not most of the agricultural work on the sugar and cocoa estates-weeding, hoeing, planting, and loading: the black does some of the heavier jobs and to a great extent runs the factories. The Indian has nowhere in these colonies got any grip on the skilled artisan class of job; you meet Indian chauffeurs, but not many Indian mechanics. Though he is invading the professions (except in Jamaica), and trade and commerce, the Indian is not getting any part in industry and only a very small share in the civil services. He tends to become a small farmer (rice, cattle, sugar cane, cocoa) when he is not still a labourer on someone else's sugar or cocoa estate. In Trinidad you see the Indian working on roads. I have seen this nowhere else in the West Indies where all the heavy work of that kind (especially under the P.W.D.) is now as a rule by the black. [112.]

Job prospects for East Indians remained firmly rooted in the agricultural sector and opportunities for social mobility were limited. Thus, education became a very important factor in providing the intellectual tools for East Indians to move off the plantations. However, this meant that East Indians had to send their children to the Canadian Presbyterian or Indian schools to receive the proper instruction to gain access to better jobs. Education ensured that children would become literate in English. However, sending children to the Presbyterian schools would entail the loss of their Indian heritage in terms of language and religion. As has been stressed, members of East Indian organizations were converts to Christianity and benefitted from a Presbyterian education. At the same time their conversion to Christianity was unsettling to the majority of East Indians who were Muslim and Hindu. For example Tyson wrote:

> Most of the Indians who have made any mark in Trinidad are Christians (which is quite different that the state of affairs in Jamaica and Trinidad, and there is unfortunately an ill feeling between the local leaders of the Hindu section and their more advanced Christian brethren. It is the agricultural classes who are preponderating

111. *Ibid*.
112. *Ibid*. 5 March, 1939, Kent House Maraval, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

> Hindu and Moslem who really need help here- the Christians for the most part are doing quite reasonably well with the backing of influential members of their own community. But the evidence committee (which I was assured on arrival represented a united and completely representative collection of interest is evidently almost entirely Christian- even the representative of the Hindus is Christian!-) and I find that there are schools of thought outside this 'fully representative and inclusive Indian Evidence Committee'. After all I did not know the full extent of the cleavage (which has been much fostered by the recent visit of a poisonous Congress-minded and seditious Hindu Priest from India).[113]

In *Decolonization and African Society,* Frederick Copper argues that British policy makers who went to Africa after the wave of strikes in the 1940's often had "deeply ingrained images of Africans as tribal peoples."[114] He contends that "these inaccurate images buttressed a prefabricated social order that served as a beacon on the hard road to directed social change that often conflated modernity and civilisation."[115] In the process of getting to know the labouring masses of Trinidad and Tobago, divisions of labour into skilled and semi-skilled, or industrial and agriculture, underpinned racial markers of difference between East and West Indians. From the viewpoints of England and India the markers of identity for East Indians were still grounded in the religious traditions that stemmed from India. However, as we have seen, these identities were in a state of flux as Indians/East Indians became indigenized to Trinidad society.

Tyson wrote his memorandum and recommended that changes be made in the agricultural sector and that Hindus and Muslims be given denominational grants so that ancestral languages like Hindi and Urdu were not lost.[116] Interestingly, on April 27, 1939, a month after collecting evidence on Trinidad, Tyson's section on Trinidad was wired to the Government of India, and subsequently printed in *The Servant of India*. The issue of schooling clearly piqued the interests of the Servant's readers. Correspondents seized on a draft section of his evidence for they reported Tyson to have said:

[113.] *Ibid.* 5 March, 1939 Kent House Maraval Port of Spain Trinidad. *Tyson is most likely referring to Parashu Ram Sharma of the SDPS.

[114] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society, The Labour Question in British and French Africa* (Cambridge, 1996), 174.
[115] *Ibid*. 174
[116.] Verbatim Evidence on Royal Commission J.D. Tyson, (WIRC 1938-1939) C.O. 950/20. T.N.A./U.K.

> It is indefensible that where education is to such a large extent financed from general revenues Christian religion denominations should be given the monopoly of education in any area in which the population in predominantly non-Christian. Areas that are predominantly populated by Hindus and Muslims the government should run secular schools even if there are Christian schools nearby. [117]

Hence the press served as a means of linking East Indian communities in Trinidad with India, and Indians in turn were able to keep up with issues affecting East Indians in Trinidad.

Tyson was questioned on his memorandum by Chairman Edward Stubbs who thought that matters pertaining to religion and language fostered separatism in East Indian communities and that these elements strengthened ties to India which should be broken. Stubbs also considered that Hindi and Urdu should not be spoken, and that maintaining these languages was "retarding development, and would eventually die out with the younger generation."[118] Stubbs seemed to think that East Indians in Trinidad were not altogether conscious of the need to keep to the Hindu and Muslim faiths, or even the notion of language; rather it was "religious missionaries from India who "put the thoughts in their heads."[119] In fact after hearing evidence from the SDMS Board, Tyson was unimpressed, and concluded that they were in "league with extremists in India and did not care about Indian politics."[120] While Stubbs acknowledged efforts to teach Hindi and Urdu, these efforts would deter fusion with the rest of the West Indian society and that no money should be awarded to schooling children in these languages. Moreover, pundits from India such as Dr Sharma were considered dangerous. Stubbs said:

> The only thing I have to say is of purely general character. I am rather doubtful on the whole question of encouraging Indians to remain Indians. Is it not rather dangerous to keep alive separatism in small communities of this kind, and would it not be better to encourage them to become West Indian rather than remain East Indian? And I think the government of

[117] *Servant of India*, 27, April, 1939. I.O.R L/P&J/8 File 338. B.L.
[118]Chairman Edward Stubbs. Verbatim of evidence given in private by Mr. J.D. Tyson at Port of Spain. (WIRC 1938- 1939) C.O. 950/2.

[119] *Ibid.*
[120.] Private letters of Jonathan Dawes Tyson. 13. March 1939 Kent House Maraval, Port of Spain, Trinidad. MSS. 341/30. B.L.

> India would agree to that. Wouldn't; they would like to see these people settle down as good Trinidadians, Jamaicans, Guianans.[121]

From the metropolitan perspective, the "good Trinidadian" meant a policy of assimilation in that the specific problems associated with East Indians in the West Indies were not important to the overall agenda of stabilizing political conditions in the West Indies. Alternatively, given the multiple positions of East Indian organizations and individuals in Trinidad, all of them were aspiring to be the "good West Indian". Whether it was with concern over the national agenda for Federation, or affirming the ideals of trusteeship, or working within the colonial structure of government or having solidarity with Afro-Trinidadians, the goal was to achieve some sort of political autonomy. In his final report on the East Indian problem, Tyson made the following claim regarding political rights amongst East Indians: "The blame is not his: self-assertiveness in these matters is forced upon him by a realization of the very definite prejudices existing against him. That the Indian, while retaining his purity of race, should become a Trinidadian in outlook is what should be aimed at in the interest both of the Indian himself and the Colony as a whole; but he can only be expected to become Trinidadian in proportion as he receives fair treatment from the rest of the island community."[122] From his time spent with members of these organizations, he had become aware of the diversity of East Indians amongst Trinidad's cosmopolitan population; he also understood that their political sensibilities were a response to those within and without their respective community who failed to listen to their plight. His statements were prophetic because constitutional change would entrench ethnic divisions amongst not only amongst East Indians, but also among Afro-Trinidadians in the late 1940s to 1960s.

[121] Chairman Edward Stubbs (W.I.R.C.1938- 1939.) C.O. 950/2 T.N.A./U.K.

[122] J.D. Tyson, *Report on East Indians in Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad 1938-1939* (Simla, 1945), 60. I.O.R. V/27/820/32. B.L.

VII. Conclusion

In his assessment of the East Indian leadership during the Moyne Commission, C.B. Mathura claimed "that the political, social and economic grievances of the Indian people are fundamentally inseparable from the grievances of the other races domiciled in this colony. Secondly, there is no single Indian organization in this colony which can claim to represent the East Indian masses."[123] By looking at the efforts of Rienzi and other East Indian leaders, one can see how each person and group imagined sustainable East Indian communities in Trinidad. Indeed there was an inherent difficulty in moving East Indians to the centre of the debates surrounding constitutional reform. Labour united all East Indian leaders; however, aspects of culture such as education, marriage, language or silences on these matters prevented East Indians in Trinidad from collectively and coherently determining their political destiny. Hence a paradox emerged: East Indians, who by virtue of their own attempts to make international affiliations were, simultaneously both a part of, and removed from the political process for independence. Rienzi's attempt to bring East Indians within the fold of his quest for self-government without offering a privileged position gave rise to leaders like Timothy Roodal and T.L.P, Sarran Teelucksingh's E.I.A.B. and the S.D.M.S.

For those organizations that were East Indian in name, the public persona of their leadership was under scrutiny. The SDMS, who felt that religious rights were not receiving attention, scrutinized the Christian leanings of the EIAB. In a similar vein, there was frustration amongst members of the EIAB over those East Indians who held steadfast to their religious traditions. The inherent tension between the displaced East Indian and the diasporic homeland of India was present in these differences, as East Indians sought to find their place in an ever changing social and political environment. Indentureship was the genesis for the

[123]Memorandum C.B. Mathura on Indian Representation (WIRC 1938-1939). C.O. 950/837. T.N.A/U.K.

East Indian presence in the colony. The promise to protect the rights of Indian indentured labourers that was made between the Governments of India and Trinidad in 1845 was equally valid in 1939. This divisiveness in East Indian politics would have a tremendous impact on how East Indians positioned themselves during the years leading up to independence in 1962.

Conclusion

A Gaze into the Future

In the wake of Trinidad's independence in 1962, C.L.R. James's poignantly reflected on the developments of West Indian society. In his book *Party Politics in the West Indies*, he asked: "Where have West Indians reached as a people? What is our status in relation to advanced and in relation to backward people?"[1] Indeed, the year 1962 was a triumph for Trinidad's first Prime Minister Eric Williams and supporters of the Peoples National Movement (P.N.M.) who made real the dream of an independent Trinidad and Tobago nation. By finding inspiration in the collective actions of the 1937 strikes, both East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian successfully petitioned Westminster for adult suffrage in 1946. Men like Rienzi who was still actively involved in the trade unions, successfully struck down the proviso that all voters would be subject to a literacy test. This would have disenfranchised the majority of Trinidad's citizens.[2] Within ten years, specifically in 1956, Williams then introduced party government into politics. Like in the 1930's, this model gave citizens in Trinidad and Tobago the impetus to form their own political organizations, and therefore be given the chance to represent the interests of their communities.[3]

With party politics however, the Westminster model entrenched existing forms of racial tension between East Indians and Afro-Trinidadians in the 1950's and 1960's The ascendancy of Bhadase Sagan Maraj[4], and the Democratic Labour Party (D.L.P.) then renamed the People's Democratic Party (P.D.P.) led by Simbhoonath and Rudranath Capildeo and the backing of the SDMS, clashed with the P.N.M. and Williams's overall goal for Federation. In a speech to the Legislative Council in 1957, Simbhnoonath Capildeo, declared

[1] C.L.R. James. *Party Politics in the West Indies, formerly P.N.M go Forward* (Trinidad, 1962).
[2] Selwyn Ryan, *Race and nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago : a study of decolonization in a multiracial society* and Kelvin Singh *Race and class struggles in a colonial state : Trinidad, 1917-1945* (Calgary, 1994)
[3] James, 3
[4] Sanatan Dharma Mahasabha. Bhadase Sagan Maraj Hostile and Recalcitrant (Trinidad, 2001).

that he did not want Federation as he saw many flaws in the scheme.[5] Moreover, when the P.N.M was defeated in the general elections of 1958, Williams made the remark that the defeat was at the hands of a "hostile and recalcitrant minority".[6] This remark would perpetually be remembered as key evidence that Williams had betrayed his feelings about the East Indian in Trinidad. This also confirmed the prevalent feeling amongst the East Indian population that Williams and his party held discriminatory views against them. Out of fear that Trinidad would descend into ethnic conflict, James wrote: "We have to make our East Indians an integral part of West Indian society; every year now they are slipping away further and further away."[7] Such a statement from James has led to scholars like Yogendra K. Malik conclude that "Trinidad is a new nation and lacks a national identity"[8] . Malik's statements reveal that the tensions between Trinidad's ethnic groups permeated Trinidad's politics, thus making the democratic process they had fought so hard for become stagnant and inert.

Many scholars who have grappled with the East Indian question in Trinidad and indeed throughout the West Indies, have tried to trace the origins of racial and ethnic tension between Trinidad's races. As we have seen, cultural and political historians account for this by arguing that Indians carried with them a fixed set of customs and traditions when they arrived in Trinidad. Moreover, as they were shuffled off to the plantations, they were cut off from society. Subsequently, changes to the island's economic, political and social structure exacerbated these feelings where East Indians were seen as operating on the fringes.

What should be clear from this thesis is that the political and social mobilization of the East Indian contingent of Trinidad and Tobago was being shaped by many forces. The formation of a distinct East Indian society was at the crossroads of many developments. In

[5] Samaroo Siewah. Lotus and Dagger. *The Capildeo Speeches* Ed. Dr. John Gaffar La Guerre (Port of Spain. 1994), 1
[6] "Bhadase the Politician", Sat Maharaj Trinidad Guardian Online .http://guardian.co.tt/columnist/2013-02-21/bhadase-politician. Date accessed, 9, December, 2013
[7] James, 146
[8] Yogendra K. Malik. *East Indians in Trinidad. A study of minority politics* (London, 1971), 3

this present study, one has seen how Emancipation in 1834, the end of indentureship in 1917, World War I and II, the strikes of 1919, constitutional reform in 1923, the global depression in the 1930's, the labour riots on 1937, and finally the granting of adult suffrage in 1946 had impacted the development of this community. More importantly, they responded to a whole nexus of characters including Indian nationalists, Afro-Trinidadians, Canadian missionaries and colonial administrators. These events and actors in turn, affected the internal dynamics of this sector in which issues over repatriation, marriage, and representation on the Legislative Council influenced the way in which East Indians demanded civic rights. Indians had been brought into an environment that displaced the African wage earner to further the agendas of planters who needed the labour for the cultivation of agricultural industries. However, this scheme came under heavy criticism by the colonial administration who saw indentureship as a costly enterprise and part of a power struggle between them and planters who maintained command over labour. This internal struggle for Trinidad was then funnelled into anti-colonial agendas in Trinidad amongst Afro-Trinidadians who disapproved of these labourers because they decreased their chances of earning fair wages. In India, indentureship was seen as hindering their ability for self-government as Indians overseas stained the character of the Indian thus inhibiting their entry into the British Empire.

As they were becoming permanent settlers, East Indians, with the help of the Canadian missionaries, gradually moved into the mercantile industries which were located in Northern parts of the island; however the majority of East Indians remained in the agricultural belts of the colony and made their livelihoods from private industries such as rice, poultry and cattle farming. Although agriculture was seen as a vital industry in Trinidad, more and more emphasis was being placed on mining and industrial industries such as oil.

From these developments, one can see that the creation of an East Indian community was non-linear given a host of variables ranging from the economic and even religious

aspects. The forms in which new identities were taking root and the mobility of Indians both in Trinidad's industries and their communication with the Indian homeland complicate our understanding of how East Indians defined their sense of belonging and indigeneity in their new homelands.

This is where the creole- Indian emerges. At its core, the creolization process means to create. Yet with each creation that seeks to be included there is an inherent exclusion that creates entrenched differences, worsened by constitutional machinery. At the elite level, organizations like the EINA and EINC were co-opted by the colonial government to offset growing agitation amongst Afro-Trinidadians. This ushered in the concept of divide and rule.

At the grassroots level, both East Indian and Afro-Trinidadian cooperated with each other. In this vein, labour leaders like Adrian Rienzi with his international outlook on anti-colonial nationalism capitalized on these alliances to successfully stage a mass revolt in 1937. As illustrated, Rienzi lived in the moment where the internationalization of labour enabled West Indian labourers to voice their problems. The development of the trade union and the mosque galvanized the masses into larger developments of anti-colonialism, where the nexus of labour, race and culture were at the forefront. However, even in this spirit of inclusion, East Indian organizations could not reach a consensus thus leading the way for a lack of vision and agreement when the time for party politics came.

To see these different political imaginations at work, literature can provide the answer. In Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun*, the characters of Sookdeo and Tiger are noteworthy. Sookdeo, a former indentured labourer is depicted as a man who has lost his fortune and path in life and who is scared of change. Selvon writes: "the dozers trampled the canes; the sticky juice ran into the soil. And he was trying to do something. He was burying money. If even they got him they wouldn't get the money. He could hear the noise coming. The canes groaning, as they toppled down before the giants. The sun spun crazily in the sky like it had

gone mad."[9] The agricultural paradise that Sookdeo helped build was gradually receding in such a way that he could no longer survive in that environment. This sense of placelesness is prevalent in studies of diaspora where the trauma of indentureship drives the will to retain culture. This is in direct contrast to Tiger, the protagonist of the novel. In Tiger's quest to provide for his family, he, like Sookdeo struggled with his own sense of identity, but he eventually achieves some measure of inner peace. Although Selvon's story takes place in 1945, this sense of restlessness has its antecedents in the 1930's when East Indian youth who had no tangible connection with India were coming to terms with a wider society and seeing Trinidad as their homeland. This was in direct contrast to their predecessors who still remembered the Indian homeland. At the end of the novel, Selvon writes that Tiger "considered going back to the cane fields of Chaguanas but the thought of it made him laugh aloud. He broke a blade of grass in his mouth. Overhead a cloud fled the sun, moving in a swift breeze. Now is a good time to plant corn, he muttered, gazing up at the sky."[10] Tiger's world was in flux; yet in that moment to be part of wider developments, in his process to know and to cooperate with the Americans, he risks the unknown.

[9] Samuel, Selvon, *a Brighter Sun* (London, 1952), 153-155
[10] *Ibid.* 210-213

As well, Selvon illustrates these dizzying yet exciting prospects by restoring a sense of peace to the primordial landscape.

Creolization takes place both at a public and inner level that defies geographical boundaries and comprises a variety of actors. This project suggests that future studies on Indians in Trinidad and the West Indies will take into account that creolization is not a linear process; it also takes place on multiple levels at any given time in which one's character both at the public and private level is always coming into contact with external influences. Hopefully this project has traced some of the political and ethnic cleavages that do exist in Trinidad. However, the greater goal is to realize that as people of Trinidad and the West Indies, we like Tiger must look to the sky and find to find that inner peace that everyone strives to achieve.

Appendix 1

Anti-indentureship pamphlet by Satyadeva, Satya, Granthamala, Johnstonegunj, Allahabad. Printed at Swadharma Pracharak Press, Delhi, 1914.

Save yourself from Depot wallas

Be careful!!!! Be careful!!! Be careful!!!
It is not service but pure deception.

Don't get enmeshed in their meshes, you will repent.
They take you overseas!!!
To Jamaica, Fiji, Damra, Mauritius
British Guiana, Trinidad and Honduras
They are not Colonies but Jails
Save, careful from Depot wallas
They spoil your religion, under the pretence of service
Don't hear sweat talks, They are your enemies

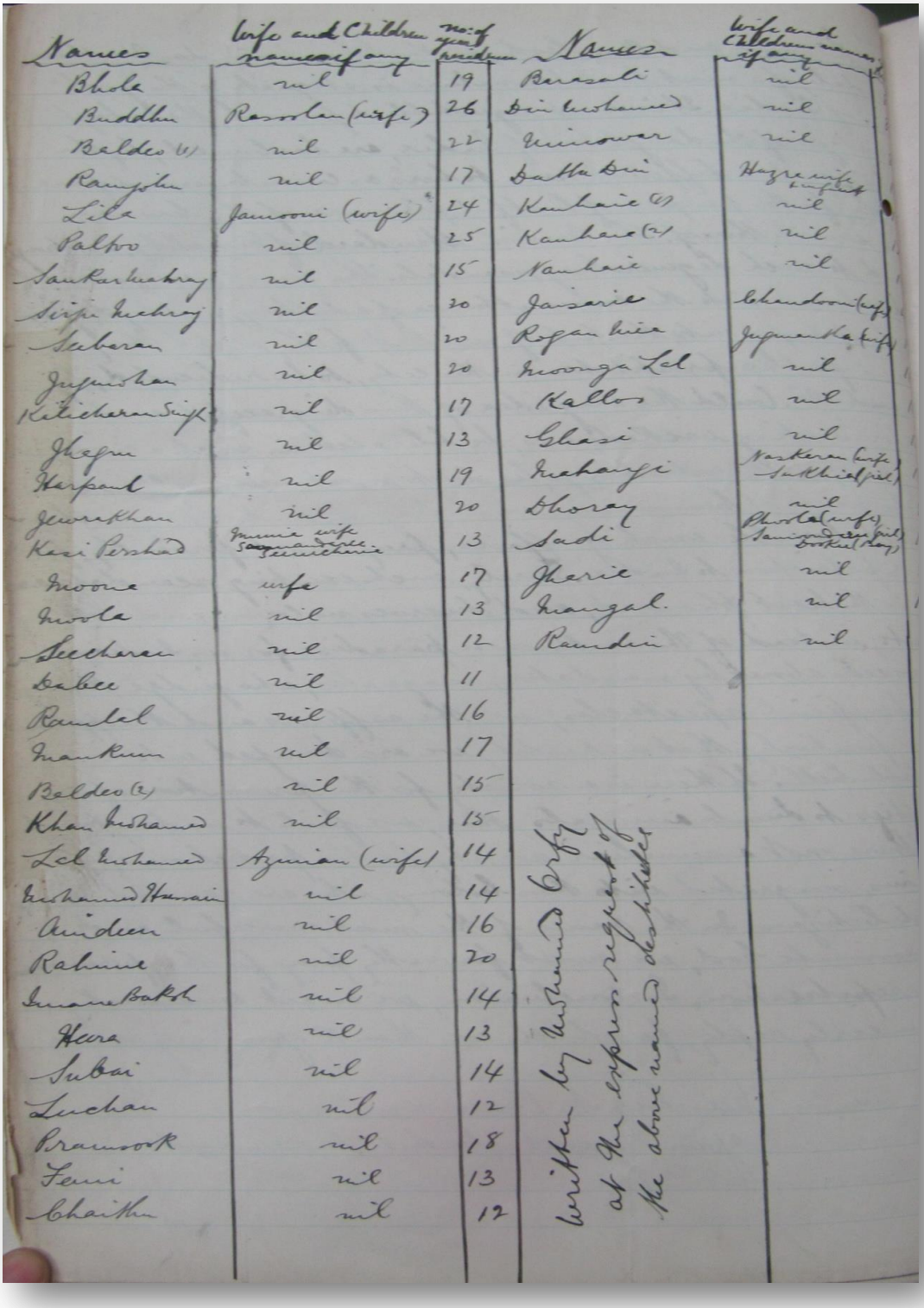
Dear Brothers

You will find these 'arkatis' at the station, at the Bazaar and enquire if you are in need of service. They have got services to offer. The will take you to Calcutta and sell you in other people's hands on agreement
They get money for this, with inducing talks,
By offering sweats they induce you. They say they will offer you service. They take you to the sahebs. Don't entangle yourself with their cajoling
Don't hear what they say, don't stand near them. They
Have Sub-Depots and Agencies everywhere. Wherever you go be careful of these people, don't forget. Circulate this news to all villages

Source: A. Marsden, Emigration Agent, Benares to Under Secretary of State for the Colonies London. July 1914, C.O. 323/717 T.N.A./U.K.

Appendix 2: Members of Mohammed Orfy's East Indian Destitute League, 1916

Source: Petition relating to destitute conditions signed by Mohammed Orfy, Bhola and others. 4, September, 1916. C.O 295/510 T.N.A./U.K. *Note this petition lists all male members which includes the number of years they spent in Trinidad and the names of their wives and children



Names	Wife and Children names if any	No: of years resident
Bhola	nil	19
Buddhu	Rasoolan (wife)	26
Baldeo (1)	nil	22
Ramjohn	nil	17
Lila	Jamooni (wife)	24
Paltoo	nil	25
Sankarbuksay	nil	15
Sirju Lachoy	nil	20
Seaberan	nil	20
Jugnoshan	nil	20
Kitcheran Sijk	nil	17
Jhagru	nil	13
Herpaul	nil	19
Jewrakhan	nil	20
Kasi Pershad	Mumia wife Sanwaroo Sanichurie	13
Moore	wife	17
Mola	nil	13
Seeberan	nil	12
Babee	nil	11
Ramlal	nil	16
Mankun	nil	17
Baldeo (2)	nil	15
Khan Mohamed	nil	15
Lal Mohamed	Ajmian (wife)	14
Mohamed Hussain	nil	14
Amideen	nil	16
Rahime	nil	20
Imam Baksh	nil	14
Hara	nil	13
Subai	nil	14
Lachan	nil	12
Ramsook	nil	18
Femi	nil	13
Chaitu	nil	12

Names	Wife and Children names if any
Barasati	nil
Din Mohamed	nil
Ramowar	nil
Datta Dei	Hazra wife Emplant
Kanhaie (1)	nil
Kanhaie (2)	nil
Kanhaie	nil
Jaisarie	Chandoon (wife)
Rajan Mia	Jugmen Ka (wife)
Moonga Lal	nil
Kallos	nil
Ghasi	nil
Mahangi	Nasteran (wife) Sukhia (girl)
Dhoray	nil
Sadi	Phoola (wife) Ramjoray (girl) Sookul (Boy)
Jharie	nil
Rangal.	nil
Ramdin	nil

Written by Mohamed Orfy at the express request of the above named destitutes

Appendix 3

List of Publications banned in Trinidad under the Seditious Publications Ordinance. These writings were cited by Adrian Cola Rienzi member of the Legislative Council for the County of Victoria, during the Moyne Commission (1938-1939).

The Negro Worker prohibited by Proclamation No, 24. Of 1932

All publications issued by the National Campaign Committee of the Communist Party of the United States of America and by the Scottsboro Campaign Press Bureau. (Proclamation No, 50 of 1932)

The Red International Labour Union (Bulletin of the Executive Bureau, Moscow)

International Press Correspondence, Information Bulletin of International Press Committee for Propaganda and Action of Revolutionary Municipal Workers

The Red Labour Union International

Trade Union Propaganda and Cultural Work Bulletin of the RILU; Worker, the Negro Material for Propagandists (Agitprop Department of the Red International of Labour Unions)

Information Bulleting of the International of Seamen and Harbour Workers

The International Negro Workers' review

A report of Proceedings and Decisions of the First International Conference of Negro Workers

The Anti-Imperialist Youth

Pamphlet. 'Negro workers and the Imperialist War intervention in the Soviet Union' by George Padmore

Pamphlet: 'What is the International Trade Union of Negro Workers?' by George Padmore

Pamphlet: 'Appeal to the Negro Seamen and Dockers'

Pamphlet: 'Transport and War Preparations Transport Workers International Propaganda and Action committee"

Pamphlet; "World Unity Congress of the International Water transport Workers and its decisions "(English and foreign version)

Pamphlets issued by the *International Trade Union of Negro Workers*: 'To the workers of Georgetown and the Toiling masses of British Guiana', & 'To the workers of Freetown and the Toiling masses of Sierra Leone'

The Daily Worker.

Communist Party of Great Britain.

The Young Worker

Young Communist League

The Unemployed Leader

National Unemployed Workers Movement

Russia Today

Friends of Soviet Union

Educational Worker

Educational Worker's league

The Searchlight

Workers' International Relief

The Anti-Imperialist Review

League against Imperialism

The Communist Review

Communist Party of Great Britain

The Labour Monthly

Labour Research Department

The Seafarer

Seamen's Minority movement

The Militant Trade Unionist

National Minority Movement

The Communist International

Source: Legislative Council, Trinidad, (WIRC, 1938-1939), C.O. 950/806. T.N.A/U.K.

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CO 318. Correspondence West Indies 1900-1940
CO 323. General Correspondence from the Colonies. 1914-1917
CO 884. War Department Files West Indies 1900-1930
CO 950. West Indian Royal Commission 1938-1939
CO 1031. Despatches. 1940-1962
MEPO. London Metropolitan Police Files 1929-1930

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India Office Records (I.O.R.)

IOR L/P&J/6. Public and Judicial Files-1891-1920
IOR L/P&J/8; Public and Judicial Files 1931-1945
IOR L/P&J/12 Public and Judicial Files: 1930-1936
IOR L/E/7-Economic and Overseas: 1922-1930

I.O.R. V/27/820/32. J.D. Tyson, *Report on East Indians in Jamaica, British Guiana and Trinidad 1938-1939* (Simla, 1945).

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Papers of Sir Johnathan Dawes Tyson, Indian Civil Service, Bengal 1920-47, Private Secretary to Governor of Bengal 1930-35, 1938, 1945-47 MSS EUR 341

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The Indian Emigrant, (Marwari Association, Calcutta), 1914-1916.

National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

Al-Azan
Hindu Times
The Comforter
The East Indian Weekly
The East Indian Patriot
The East Indian Advocate
The East Indian Herald
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The Indian
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